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## Perpetrators and protectors:

*Centering family relations in addressing violence in poor neighbourhoods*

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# PERPETRATORS AND PROTECTORS: CENTERING FAMILY RELATIONS IN ADDRESSING VIOLENCE IN POOR NEIGHBOURHOODS



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CENTERING FAMILY RELATIONS IN  
ADDRESSING VIOLENCE IN POOR  
NEIGHBOURHOODS**

PRAXIS PAPER

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## FOREWORD

Working in local communities, it is clear that families occupy a hugely ambiguous role as both perpetrators, victims and protectors of violence. While human rights violations are often recorded as individual violations, families are in as much victims. Families are also the main support base for human rights victims. As such families can prevent violence and they will be the ones picking up the pieces after violent encounters. However, families are also the context of horrible forms of violence – especially against women and children. This leaves families as a central actor in addressing violence.

The research published in this report is prepared by the Global Alliance on Urban Violence. Throughout the life span of alliance (2014 – 2020) a key mode of work has been to create knowledge across three, sometimes all four countries represented in the alliance – Liberia, Philippines, South Africa and Denmark. This has been done by systematically asking questions and produce data across contexts, thus enabling members of the alliance to generate insights, that have both supported them in improving their interventions locally as well as feed into advocacy processes.

The Global Alliance on Urban Violence have published on dilemmas of development and violence in the city, community organizing, psycho-social interventions, social works models, policing and state violence, prevention and rehabilitation as well as advocacy. But while knowledge was generated on individual victims, communities and authorities, the alliance for a long time ignored the family setting. Therefore, the Global Alliance on Urban Violence in 2018 decided to pay more systematic attention to families and kinship relations in poor urban settings. The result of this common effort is the current publication on violence, family and kinship relations. A publication that we in the alliance are quite proud of, both in terms of content and process. Process-wise because the production of this research has been an experience of true collaboration. All partners having contributed to the collection of data, analysis work and writing up of the report in most fruitful ways and fulfilling the ambition of partnership guided by principles of transparency, equality and mutual responsibility. Ideals that sound good but are less easily put into practice.

In terms of content, this research represents the 'last piece of the puzzle' in our common knowledge generation efforts on how to counter violence in poor urban communities. Like other publications by the Global Alliance on Urban Violence, the analysis is based on a public health inspired model around understanding the social ecology of violence. Here families are seen as both potential victims, perpetrators and protectors in relation to violence. In the social ecology of violence, families thus occupy a position along with communities, networks and authorities, that can also be both protectors and perpetrators. So, while the family is often lauded as a solution to many problems, it is also clear from the research done, that many families struggle immensely, often in huge conflicts with themselves. Hence, it is imperative that human rights and development organisations, when dealing with violence, find ways of supporting families. Not just as contexts of individual violations but as the primary beneficiary. In the Global Alliance on Urban Violence, we hope that the insights presented on the following pages will be able to contribute to just that.

On behalf of the Global Alliance on Urban Violence – Balay, CSVr, LAPS and DIGNITY,

Mette Møhl Ambjørnsen, DIGNITY – Danish Institute Against Torture

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In this report, we ask 'How and to what extent do families and kinship relations protect against, perpetrate and/or suffer from violence?' The concern with understanding how families cope with violence in respectively protective and perpetrative ways emerges out of a partnership between the Liberian Association of Psychosocial Services (LAPS), the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation in South Africa (CSVr), the Balay Rehabilitation Centre in the Philippines and DIGNITY-the Danish Institute against Torture. While we have worked with families as a crucial stakeholder in all communities, we have not explicitly explored the ways in which families play a part in protection and perpetration as well as fall victim to violence. Hence, we designed this research project to try to understand families and their struggles to survive in Liberia, South Africa and the Philippines. Conceptually, the project was animated by two bodies of literature – intersectional analyses and ecological approaches – to understand the relationship between families and violence. Empirically, the analysis is based on experiences from past interventions as well as a systematic data collection project among some of the families involved in the interventions. The ambition is not to compare families and violence across different sites. Rather, it is to enable an inductive process of reflection and innovation by putting different contexts into a structured conversation.

Among the important conclusions of the study, families are shown to be gendered and generational institutions that are embedded in a larger ecology of communal, state and non-state authorities. This social ecology is structured by strong normative ideals about what families should look like, what constitutes moral comportment and what forms of violence are perceived as legitimate. In this way, we argue that specific configurations of roles, power and status produce specific forms of normative and practical notions of family life. However, despite the strength of these models, family behaviour often failed to conform to them, leading to significant amounts of tension and violence. Secondly, across all contexts we found that legacies of violence, poverty and marginalisation animated family life and the ability of families to cope. Along with the temporal dimension, the study suggests that we cannot necessarily see internal family violence (domestic violence, intimate partner violence or child abuse) as separate from violence visited upon the family from the outside (vigilantism, extrajudicial killings or torture). Instead, the study illustrates how different domains of violence across the social ecology fold into family life. This analysis led us to explore critically how families perceive the functionality of violence based on a situated consideration and justification of whether it is appropriate, legitimate, or necessary in a non-judgmental way. It was clear from the research that most of the families were struggling – not only to survive and cope with the violence in its different forms, but also simply with being a family.

While all the respondents felt significant pressures and tensions in fulfilling their own expectations of family life, we also identified important instances of bravery, resistance and generosity – resilience in an oft-repeated formulation. However, rather than focusing on these forms of resilience as positive ways of coping, we focused on what families did to survive and to protect themselves and (some of) their members. These practices included exclusion of some members of the family to protect the integrity of the remaining members. In other instances, we noted that violence or the effects of violence were silenced in ways that putatively allowed the family to go on living. Finally, blame for violence was deferred out of the family. In different ways, these practices



worked but they came with a price. They might even have been counterproductive. For instance, by suggesting that the Philippine police had wrongly targeted members of a family, blame was deferred outside while the premise of the war – that drug addicts must be killed – remained largely uncontested. While this is certainly true, it remains equally true that in the circumstances of serious state repression and communal stigmatisation, this was the strategy available – even if it was potentially counterproductive. The same reservations can be made about all the other strategies of protection, even the most violent ones. While they may be counterproductive and violent, they must be understood within the given social ecology.

We did not test interventions or try to compare violence across contexts. Rather, our ambition was to enable conversations across contexts and between partners. This ambition resonates with the vision of the partnership in which we reflect collectively and in collaboration on our practices and contexts. This enabled us to formulate the reflections summarised below that may enrich community-led interventions (our own and those of others), as well as frame advocacy drives around what we could call everyday forms of torture and ill-treatment. Each challenge is formulated with reference to normative frameworks, though admittedly somewhat simplified ones.

- Critical engagement with the binary opposition between protection and perpetration. While interventions often distinguish between good protection and bad perpetration, in everyday life this often boils down to perspectives;
- Understanding the complex structures of local violence that families are caught up in. While frameworks compartmentalise violence, they are often experienced as part of a social ecology of family, communal, state and non-state violence;
- Appreciating how state and communal violence is folded into family life. While family violence is often seen as domestic violence and child abuse, it can seldom be understood without an understanding of how state and communal violence are embedded in family life;
- Understanding the legacies of violence. While monitoring focuses on individual and specific cases, most incidents form part of long-term forms of violence and conflict;
- Factoring in the pervasiveness of everyday violence. While organisations employ terms such as ‘normalisation of violence’, violent practices in families should never be understood as part of a culture of violence. Rather, they should be seen as responses to external pressures;
- Appreciating the gendered hierarchies of victimhood. While human rights monitoring often privileges spectacular forms of violence, often against men, women’s experiences are often reduced to functions of male victimisation or secondary victimhood in ways that invisibilise gendered forms of victimisation;
- Understanding how specific individual violations relate to continuous crisis. Human rights research often focuses on politically motivated violations at the expense of understanding how violations may be related to intimacy, especially in the context of inequality and poverty;

- Incorporating practices of communal stigmatisation. Interested in assigning state obligations, human rights organisations have difficulty in coming to terms with communal forms of stigmatisation and violence that frame the ability of families to cope with violence;
- Understanding normative and practical models of family life. Assumptions about families and households dominate much intervention. However, there is a need to assess existing family models, not least how they work through and reproduce gendered and generational norms despite practical and situated models for family survival; and
- Understanding the complex mechanisms of family survival. While human rights and development organisations often praise and look for resilience – which they understand as positive ways of coping – we need to understand that families often engage in survival practices that silence violations, assign blame outside immediate families and exclude erring family members in order to survive.

These reflections do not constitute a blueprint for interventions. However, they do suggest ways of working with traumatised families. They also outline some of the dilemmas our organisations faced in relation to including families in human rights interventions in ways that take into account local context and the ambiguous relationship between families and violence.

# CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

What is the role of families in state and non-state violence? What happens when we include families in our gaze rather than focusing narrowly on individual victims of violence? Arguably, families occupy a hugely ambiguous role. While human rights violations are often recorded as individual violations, families also experience severe consequences as a result of such violations. Families are the main support base for human rights victims. Families can prevent violence and they will be the ones picking up the pieces after violent encounters. This leaves families as a central factor in any attempt to address violence. However, families are also the context of horrible forms of violence – especially against women and children.

In our work in Liberia, South Africa and the Philippines all these roles – as perpetrators and protectors, and indeed also as victims – are clearly visible. However, despite the work done across the three contexts, it remains clear that the question of how families relate to violence deserves a closer look. Because it appeared necessary on the ground and in the daily work, all organisations participating in this project have worked with families in one way or another. It is this work that we now intend to discuss the strength of through the lens of families. Hence, in this knowledge-generating sub-project under the Global Alliance on Urban Violence, we explore, across three contexts, the role of families and kinship relations in addressing violence in communities to understand how and the extent to which families suffer from, protect against or perpetrate violence. We ask, ‘How and to what extent do families and kinship relations protect against, perpetrate and/or suffer from violence?’

Empirically, the paper is based on two main sources of information: 1) the long-term practice of LAPS (the Liberian Association for Psycho-Social Services), the CSVR (Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation) in South Africa and the Balay Rehabilitation Centre in the Philippines, and 2) a more systematic data collection within families in which there have been interventions of a different nature in the past. In this second empirical data set, each organisation identified six to eight families to follow over a period of time to carry out interviews and reflections. We describe the data collection below. Suffice for now to say that we did not aim to compare the different data sets deductively. Rather, our comparison is inductive in that we attempt to create a foundation for reflections about the role of families in relation to authority-based violence in a way that Sian Lazar usefully terms ‘disjunctive comparison’ where we can pose open questions about, for instance, what constitutes a family across different sites (Lazar 2012: 351). The most important reason for this is that the individual organisations, based on their own strategic goals, identified the target groups they wanted to engage with. Hence, in Liberia the target group included families who had lost members to the Ebola virus. In the Philippines, the most pressing concern was to understand how families dealt with extra-judicial killings resulting from the bloody war on drugs. Finally, in South Africa the focus was on families who were still marked by apartheid human rights violations. While these choices were the results of a commitment to engage with the priorities of the organisations, this spread also allowed us to see and explore a number of different and intersecting forms of violence in which families were protective, perpetrative and victims – often in different ways at the same time.

While the three sites are quite different, they share a particular urban form that can be

characterised as peri-urban (Simon 2008); that is, areas that defy neat distinctions between the urban and the rural. Such areas are often marked by marginalisation by and distance from productive networks, high unemployment and varying degrees of social dysfunctionality. Furthermore, they are often marked by high levels of both state and non-state violence. Hence we look at how these families cope with violence in contexts of social marginalisation and poverty where, on the one hand, residents have been excluded from what could be construed as mainstream society, yet on the other hand they are heavily policed.

This report is primarily analytical, and makes no attempt to suggest a blueprint or template for action. However, it does suggest several potential avenues and necessary reflections for working with families and violence in poor neighbourhoods. The concluding reflections are both for internal consumption in the Global Alliance and potentially may provide inspiration for other organisations working with families and violence. They comprise the following ten reflections that potentially transform how we should work with families in relation to state, communal and family violence:

- Critical engagement with the binary opposition between protection and perpetration
- Understanding the complex structures of local violence that families are caught up in
- Appreciating how state and communal violence is folded into family life
- Understanding the legacies of violence
- Factoring in the pervasiveness of everyday violence
- Appreciating the gendered hierarchies of victimhood
- Understanding how specific, individual violations relate to continuous crisis
- Incorporating practices of communal stigmatisation
- Understanding normative and practical models of family life
- Understanding the complex mechanisms of family survival.

What these reflections all suggest is the imperative of withholding moral judgements when working with families in violent and poor communities. Families will often have to engage in practices that may appear brutal, morally compromised and counterproductive. We do not suggest that we should condone such practices, but we must be able to see past them and appreciate the sometimes impossible contradictions that families must deal with.

We organise our analysis in four sections. In Chapter 2, we provide a more detailed account of the ecological and intersectional understandings of violence as well as anthropological and public health literature on the relationship between violence and families globally and in the three empirical contexts. In Chapter 3, we outline



the methodological choices and challenges of the study. In Chapter 4, we introduce the three contexts through the data that we gathered. This includes describing the peri-urban communities, as well as the particular forms of violence that mark the areas and the families in the study. In Chapter 5, we begin by presenting three case studies from each of the three areas. The case studies allow us to explore three specific themes cutting across the three contexts. The themes comprise gendered family relations and hierarchies of victimhood; legacies of violence; and families as protective and perpetrative institutions. These themes have been generated in a grounded, bottom-up approach from the data set. Finally, in a brief concluding chapter, we expand on the implications of the findings for future interventions and ask what we are gaining by focusing on families.





## CHAPTER 2: UNDERSTANDING FAMILY AND VIOLENCE

The analytical focus of the paper is on understanding how families cope with violence and what role violence plays in the reproduction of families. Conceptually, the paper draws on two theoretical understandings of violence – an ecological and an intersectional understanding. We begin by introducing these larger concepts in order to be able to formulate a conceptual understanding of families and violence.

### Social ecology and intersectionality

Ecological models argue that we need to understand violence within a social ecology of families and intimate relations, communities and authorities (Celermajer 2018; Bronfenbrenner 1979). The argument that we derive from this is that relations among family, community and authorities can be both perpetrative and protective of groups and individuals at risk. Families are, as we noted, potential victims, perpetrators and protectors; similarly, communities can help out in times of need and protect people or its representatives can perpetrate serious forms of, for instance mob violence; authorities (state and non-state) can perpetrate or prevent torture and other forms of violence. Hence, a central element in the work of our partnership across the different contexts has been to work to improve or strengthen – sometimes establish – sound relations with families, communities, and authorities – cognisant that such ‘sound relations’ are often reproducing and upholding systems of inequality, as we return to below.<sup>1</sup> Hence, we have a particular focus on relations with authorities and communities. This paper will complement this work around the ecological understanding by exploring in more detail family relations with regards to violence and in relation to the other levels of the ecology of violence and protection.

The socio-ecological model is based on the premise that people always find themselves entangled in multiple different environments, both related to their own background and personalities, as well as everyday surroundings, local communities, and institutions of society and state. The ecological systems model (Bronfenbrenner 1979 and 1994) organises these different environments, defined as ecosystems, in different levels. In the model, the contexts of the different ecosystems affecting the individual are divided into five dimensions or, in other words, levels of external influence on the individual. The model was originally created to explain how the inherent qualities of a child and its environment interact to influence how it will grow and develop (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). However, it has also been applied in analyses of domestic violence and the maintenance thereof (Carlson 1984; Heise 1998). Both Carlson (1984) and Heise (1998) argue that intimate partner violence is important to investigate as a phenomenon not isolated to the micro- or macro-levels. Heise (1998) argues that the model can contribute to the understanding of violence against women as a phenomenon unexplainable by single factors. In 2005, the World Health Organisation (WHO) developed a new version of the ecological model to understand the causes of violence against women (García-Moreno et al 2006) with specific focus on intimate partner violence. Thus, this model is well suited to accommodate the aspect of gender when investigating urban violence.

The second conceptual inspiration comes from the intersectional understanding of violence. Intersectionality emerges out of feminist scholarship.<sup>2</sup> This scholarship is interested in understanding the multiple layers of inequality that produce violence against women – class, gender, race, religion and/or disability for instance. This approach has been put to very productive use in understanding violence not only against women but also against migrants, young men, victims of disease and sexual minorities. In this way, this paper takes as its point of departure that family and kin relations exist within the context of inherent gender and power dynamics, which may also have an impact on responses and actions. While a focus on families brings gender and generational conflicts and systems of inequality into especially sharp relief, it is clearly not limited to those two. The family structure is hence conceptualised as a context-specific configuration of roles, power and status. They depend on families’ socio-economic background, cultural and/or religious beliefs, family patterns and extent of urbanisation, to mention some of the intersecting systems of inequality.

As a term intersectionality is credited to Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989) who used it to demonstrate the multiple intersections of violence against Black women. In her classic text *Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex*, she argued for a feminist conceptualisation of race, gender and immigrant status as interdependent phenomena as a new approach to analysing the lived experience of African-American women.<sup>3</sup> The point is that while gender is central to understanding violence gender gives us only one perspective in understanding it. To elucidate through example, Collins (1998) details the historical state-sanctioned violence of lynching of African Americans. The lens employed to understand this form of violence was explicitly race based yet one fundamental to men (Harris 1984; Oliver 1994 in Collins 1998: 918). Reserving the lynching metaphor for men, she observes, relegates African-American women to supportive roles within civil society and erases their individual experiences of violence. Employing an intersectional framework, therefore, is indispensable in highlighting the systems of power, violence and inequality that manifest within personal relationships and between family members.

### Violence and family

While models of social ecology and intersectionality provide broad theoretical frameworks, we also need to touch briefly on the conceptual issues of violence and the family as we understand them in this paper. Beginning with violence, within international law violence is understood as excessive use of force that cannot be legitimised as self-defence or is not proportional to the threat that the force employed is set to counter. This ‘just war’ principle has been and is still dominant as an interpretive model within large sections of society (Balibar 1998), including among many of our informants, who maintained that they understood and expected the violence perpetrated against them or their kin. This leaves violence as the exceptional, the punishable and the excessively destructive. Against this approach to violence, we maintain firstly that violence is not only destructive but also productive of social relations (Das and Poole 2004). This approach draws in part from Walter Benjamin’s classic text, *Critique of Violence* (Benjamin 2018) where he distinguishes between law-producing violence and law-maintaining violence. An example of law-producing violence could be revolutionary war since it reconfigures power in new ways. Law-



maintaining violence, on the other hand, protects established systems of power. If we understand this through an ecological and intersectional approach, we see that law-maintaining violence is about upholding systems of inequality. These systems are often intersecting systems of gender, generation, class, race and nationality that cut across different levels of the social ecology, producing networked and ever-shifting relations of power involving patriarchy, autochthony, gerontocracy and racialised superiority. Hence, migrant families may be particularly vulnerable within some of these systems of inequality at the same time as they are organised along internal gender and generational structures that produce violence against women, children and family members with a disability or a different sexuality. Elsewhere (Warburg et al 2018)<sup>4</sup> we term this kind of law-maintaining violence authority-based violence; that is, violence that is legitimised as part of a defence of particular situated moral orders spanning the local and the global. This evidently cuts across family, community, and state. The boundary between state and non-state has been central in many human rights frameworks, including the Convention Against Torture. It is these connections between violence and families that we are able to capture within an ecological and intersectional understanding. However, there is a growing realisation that it is counterproductive and empirically problematic to distinguish too rigidly between these systems of inequality and the violence they produce.<sup>5</sup>

In international law and in many interventions, violence is often compartmentalised in separate domains, for instance state violence and torture, violence against children and women, domestic violence or violence against migrants and refugees. Each of these domains is attached to separate conventions or legal frameworks. However, as Javier Auyero and Fernanda Berti (2016) suggest, these different forms of violence are often folded into one another were for instance state violence or criminal violence animate forms of domestic violence. As an example of this, a mother beating her children may be a way to protect them from greater harm in the form of gang affiliation or state extrajudicial killings emanating from their engagement with, for instance, drugs. This suggests that protection from violence can in some instances be extremely violent. Theoretically, this underlines the importance of understanding violence across the social ecology.

The examples illustrate the importance of paying acute attention to the family as both protectors and perpetrators of violence, as well as being an arena of intense contestation (Auyero & Berti 2015). Taking the family as a point of departure when theorising violence raises a number of analytical considerations; not only the question of what constitutes a family but also how we might understand different configurations of roles, statuses and power within these formations. Examining such questions and contributing knowledge to the study of 'family' as a social institution includes theorists from within the disciplines of anthropology, history, sociology, economics and psychology, as well as public health. Each of these fields has attempted to define the social phenomena under examination in differing ways. Rather than choosing one definition, we consider families as they were presented to us: paradoxically fractured and bounded, violent and protective, traumatised and trauma-producing.

Hence, we subscribe to feminist critics who, during a 'rebirth' (Carsten 2000) of family theorising in the 1980s and 90s, problematised the understanding of families as distinctly homogenous, heteronormative, and bounded units. With the advent of

such inquiry, the offer of gender as a social construction and the reimagination of the family nucleus were propounded, in turn disrupting biological notions of relatedness, once a defining feature of European cultural history. As Gittins suggested back in 1985: 'The first task is to question the assumption that there is, and has been, one single phenomenon that we can call the family. Historical, anthropological and contemporary findings show otherwise... Thus it is essential to start thinking of families rather than the family' (Gittins 1985: 1–2).

Relatedly, more recent theoretical considerations of family have continued within this vein of plurality of forms. Sahlin (2013) highlights its inclusive tendencies and shapeshifting nature in what he terms the 'mutuality of being'. Drawing upon a wealth of ethnographic material, Sahlin offers the term to encompass both the symbolic notion of belonging in families and their formation as distinctly cultural, as opposed to biological. Understanding family in terms of mutuality is helpful in transcending the Euro-American model of blood ties as a marker for relatedness. However, as has been noted by Jeanette Edwards and Marilyn Strathern, this somewhat rosy view of the inherent connectedness of families cloaks the more negative qualities of kinship with a 'sentimentalised view of sociality as sociability and of kinship ("family") as community' (2000: 152 in Carsten 2013: 246). Indeed, in this report we not only attend to the more dissentient qualities of families but also acknowledge the capabilities of families to reproduce, condone and at times enforce violence. As such, there is a recognition of families as 'both a site of oppression and conflict and a source of strength, solidarity, and the collective ability to survive' (Osmond & Thorne 2009: 617). Through our data, the family emerges as a strong resource for coping with the effects of violence but also as a perpetrator spawning new forms of violence for victims to endure. Additionally, our data suggests that families are often conceptualised and idealised as one thing, but then almost always turn out to be another.

These conceptual remarks propel us to ask a number of sub-questions that we will attempt to answer in this study:

- How do specific configurations of family roles, power and status produce specific forms of normative and practical notions of family life?
- How do legacies of violence, along with poverty and marginalisation, animate family life and the ability of families to cope?
- How are different domains of violence across the social ecology folded into family life?
- How and to what extent do families both perpetrate and protect against violence?

## CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this report is to explore the central question ‘How and to what extent do families and kinship relations protect against, perpetrate or suffer from violence?’ Through conceptualising families and violence within ecological and intersectional frameworks, we identified four sub-questions around which the data collection was organised:

- How do specific configurations of family roles, power and status produce specific forms of normative and practical notions of family life?
- How do legacies of violence, along with poverty and marginalisation, animate family life and the ability of families to cope?
- How are different domains of violence across the social ecology folded into family life?
- How and to what extent do families both perpetrate and protect against violence?

To answer the first question, we need to pay attention to how families are structured and organised in different settings. The second question calls for an exploration into how past and present forms of violence are linked and entangled. The third question guides the attention to understanding how different scales of violence – state, communal and domestic – relate to one another. Finally, in the fourth question, we explore how families condone, counteract, enforce or protect against strong societal and communitarian notions of danger and moral decay allegedly caused by individual family members who are part of diverse risk groups.

### Sampling, data collection and analysis

We organised the data collection through and/or parallel to the interventions that were already taking place in the local projects<sup>6</sup> in Liberia, South Africa and the Philippines. The projects have, to different degrees, incorporated families and kinship relations from their inception. Hence, the task of exploring family and kinship relations differed across the organisations. While it is necessary for comparative reasons to establish a common empirical ground that will allow for discussion and reflection across the projects and settings, the purpose is explorative (that is, inductive) rather than to test specific models or theories (deductive). Hence, we are not sampling for comparison on the structures of family and kinship structures across the three contexts. Rather, we want to be able to discuss families’ relations to violence and strategies for coping with it.<sup>7</sup> As we were not aiming for deductive comparison but wanted to enable conversation and reflection across the three projects (explorative, inductive), issues of representivity were less central and cannot be supported by the data or the data collection. This also means that we did not test interventions but aimed to generate innovation.

The sampling was carried out through a process where each organisation selected eight families to be part of a study in which at least one family member was already

part of the intervention. As the three organisations had different priorities, they chose to focus on different violence contexts. In Liberia, we chose to focus on families that in one way or another had suffered in the Ebola crisis of 2014-15. In Balay, the preeminent issue was the war on drugs that had killed thousands of people, not least within the areas where Balay works. In South Africa, the common denominator was that all sampled families had been affected by apartheid violence decades earlier and still suffered from the effects of torture and ill-treatment.

Each of the families was approached and, through a rigorous ethical procedure, asked if they wanted to participate in the study; their rights were comprehensively explained, not least that although the research project ran concurrently with the intervention, the two were in no way linked. In other words, participants could leave the research project at any time with no consequences for their continued enrolment in the intervention. As expected, some of the families dropped out, and in the end six families in each context remained with the project.

The data collection was organised as a series of repeat visits to the families that ran parallel with but distinct from the interventions taking place. How the repeat visits were conducted varied across the three organisations, however; because the interventions were different, they called for different data collection methods. In Liberia, field staff and community mobilisers, in collaboration with the documenting staffs of LAPS, assumed responsibility for carrying out interviews with individuals about their families and family situations. The recruitment took place through vocational training programmes (apprenticeship training) organised by LAPS. In South Africa, participants were recruited among participants in psychosocial counselling that had been ongoing for several years and the data collection was undertaken by a highly experienced social worker. In both South Africa and Liberia, the social workers and community organisers subsequently engaged in debriefings with documenting staff (Cartor Temba and Dominique Dix-Peek). In the Philippines, where there were different forms of intervention, Juancho Reyes, Balay’s documentation officer, assumed responsibility for data collection and interviews as well as analysis.

Each of the visits aimed at gathering data on a set of predetermined issues. This began with a thorough profile of each family and a more formalised account of the family history of violence. While local intervention and documentation staff knew about the family histories from the interventions, previous accounts had not been collected with a study in mind. As the data collection took place over a two- to three-month period we also aimed at collecting data on events in the families as they were unfolding. This focus on current events complemented the historical accounts. Together they revealed a picture of the family dynamics. Most families have a clear idea of who should belong to the family, and it is often a nuclear one (mom, dad and children). They often also have strong ideas of what a family should look like as a moral entity. However, many families no longer look like that, even if that is what people say at the initial interview and the filling out of the household roster.

After each visit, local team members wrote notes that constituted a first level of data analysis. Cartor, Dominique and Juancho would subsequently engage with Senior Researcher Steffen Jensen and Researcher Meghan Belcher to discuss the data collection, and this would be followed by new rounds of data collection and clarification. The core of the interviews took place over three months at different



times, depending on the availability of the data collectors and informants, as well as the rhythm of the interventions. These initial interviews were followed up over several months, indeed right into the drafting period, to ensure all details were correct. During the period of data collection, reflections were ongoing and organised as comments in a common document in which all members of the team took part. Themes were identified and analysed from the point of view of individual cases. In this way, data collection and analysis became part of an ongoing conversation of disjunctive comparison. This constituted a process akin to grounded theory, where analytical themes emerged from the empirical material rather than from a set of predetermined indicators.

The drafting took place over a period of just more than one month where members of the drafting team would comment on drafts produced, hence continuing the conversation. While we are not comparing the different cases deductively, each case contributed differently to the formulation of a theme, which in turn served as a point of departure for reflections in other cases at the heart of disjunctive comparison. For instance, Philippine families have strong notions of normative family structures. This allowed us to ask questions about normative family structures in both Liberia and South Africa. The South African case suggested the importance of legacies of violence that could be explored in the other countries as well. Finally, in Liberia many of the informants seemed to have been excluded from families. This allowed us to ask questions about whether, and how, families protect themselves through driving out a member, paving the way for a string of queries transcending binary notions of 'good' protection and 'bad' perpetration.

## Methodological challenges

While the data collection revealed important insights about family dynamics and violence across the three contexts, there were limitations to what the data allowed us to conclude and challenges to the strength of the data.

Firstly, the data does not allow for meaningful comparisons across the three sites, meaning we were unable to compare motivations, practices and effects of violence. This was a deliberate choice. To allow for deductive comparison we would have had to impose much stricter data discipline on already diverse interventions. This was not feasible, desirable or in line with the partnership collaboration in which this study is embedded. Instead, we opted for inductive comparisons in which we may generate new ideas and insights.

Secondly, the data collection was carried out differently and with different skills across the three sites. While this does not have to be a problem given the appropriate training and supervision, it did result in kinds of data that were so diverse it was sometimes hard to use them as part of a conversation, let alone comparison. We tried to mitigate this gap in research capacity by engaging in processes of mentoring, common reflections and coproduction.

Thirdly, data collection was embedded in interventions. This always raises concerns around the ability of researchers to navigate proximity and normative intervention ideals. These are real concerns and we attempted to mitigate them by constantly

reflecting across the cases, questioning logics and trying to understand connections. However, being embedded in an intervention is not inherently bad. On the contrary, it can generate insights at a much deeper level if team members manage the risk responsibly and reflexively. It also potentially allows for ownership of data and analysis when interventionist organisations engage in coproduction of data and analysis.

Fourthly, and related to the previous challenge, data collection was embedded in different interventionist modalities. In South Africa, an experienced trauma counsellor generated sets of data embedded in psychosocial language, whereas in Liberia the data collection was carried out by community development facilitators using a very different conceptual language. Finally, in the Philippines, the data collection was carried out by the documentation officer on the back of an effort to organise survivors in families victimised in the war on drugs. This resulted in quite diverse data. Again, we attempted to mitigate the challenges by engaging in constant reflection across the three contexts.

Finally, data collection and analysis were to some extent removed from each other. While the Copenhagen-based staff had prior knowledge and research experience in the different sites, the data collection was twice removed in the sense that data was transferred from primary data collectors to nationally based documentation officers (with the Philippines as an exception) who then transferred data onwards to Copenhagen, where it went through first-level analysis. The distance was partly mitigated through ongoing conversations within and between research team members, who all took part in drafting sections of the report.

In summary, while there are real methodological concerns to be raised that affect the conclusions we can infer from the study and the comparisons we may draw, the study does provide useful and unique insights into how families relate to and cope with violence.

## CHAPTER 4: COMMUNITY CONTEXTS OF FAMILY LIFE

In this chapter, we will briefly introduce the community contexts that structure the lives and experiences with violence of the respondents in the study. Each of the sections focuses on one urban context in which interventions took place and data was collected. The aim is not to compare kinds of violence across contexts. Rather, we seek to locate our analysis of family life and violence in the specific contexts in which the violence occurs and which the families have to cope with. Each section consists of three elements. First, we introduce the community setting, its history and its people. Secondly, we describe the specific forms of violence – the war on drugs in the Philippines, apartheid violence in South Africa, and Ebola in Liberia. Each of these forms of violence are embedded in larger structures of violence and form part of them. Finally, we describe in more detail the participating families and respondents in terms of violent history, socioeconomic status and family composition. The chapter concludes that while there are huge, predictable differences, several questions are relevant in different ways across all contexts. These questions include how families are normatively structured and what models of family life have developed; how legacies of violence animate present violence and crisis, and whether families cope with the violence in perpetrative or protective ways.

We have changed the names of the individual sites to protect the participants. As mentioned above, while the sites are different, they do share a particular form of marginalisation, a function of their more or less peri-urban status (Davis 2008). They are heavily policed, far from important economic and social networks, poor, and often characterised by high levels of state and non-state violence.

### Bagong Valencia, the Philippines

Bagong Valencia, located in the northern part of Metro Manila, was constructed in the early to mid-1980s as a resettlement site for slum dwellers in Manila during the presidency of Ferdinand Marcos. It was part of his campaign to beautify Manila and make way for other economic and infrastructural projects, largely funded by international donor agencies (HUDCC 2011). In 1984 the National Housing Authority claimed to have resettled 68,688 families into the region (Karaos 1995: 125). Over the years, some 250,000 people have come to live in Bagong Valencia.

In official discourse, relocation was offered as a chance for slum dwellers to begin anew. However, the volume of human displacement, coupled with the volatility of governmental ‘flushing out’ methods, only served to reproduce the precarity of community life from the very beginning. The coercive manner in which residents were removed from Manila and forced to navigate their sources of livelihood anew meant that the everyday forms of violence present within the previous urban setting remained largely unchanged (Jensen et al 2013).

Socioeconomic levels are below the national poverty line and unemployment rates are approximated at between 45% and 65% (Jensen et al 2013; Jensen & Hapal 2014). Furthermore, the area’s high population density has translated into situations of increased precarity. As the demand for space has grown, more and more residents are forced into so-called excess lots, that is, informal housing near and on creeks, the graveyard, and near the Marilao River. This has made for perilous and unhealthy living quarters where residents must struggle for space in competition with other residents, with the dead and with nature in the form of the ever-present danger of floods. As such, ‘new society’ sites have failed to accommodate the significant housing needs of the poor. The built environment reflects these inadequacies, with buildings propped atop stilts too frail to support their weight long-term. These are the living conditions families in Bagong Valencia face day in and day out.

Thus, simply sustaining a living is the most pressing daily concern for most families in Bagong Valencia. Owing to the lack of educational opportunities, as well as the distance from the formal economy, most adults have limited engagement with the formal economy. Instead, they employ themselves in an informal economy that pays little and demands long workdays. This affects the quality of family life in various ways. The potential for young people to enter schooling, to eat enough nutritious food to ensure health, to access quality health services and to stay safe from environmental and anthropogenic hazards are major concerns, but they are not the only ones.

Long-term exposure to such living conditions has led to many families being indebted to loan sharks and powerful families. Thus, families must often rely on what is known colloquially as *diskarte*. This term refers to social navigation that displays grit and perseverance, whereby one must be resourceful in dealing with situations that appear hopeless or impossible to solve (Galam 2018: 1056). Often, however, the gap between circumstance and need compels *diskarte* into illicit forms. One such form is involvement in the illegal drug trade.

### The War on Drugs

Since 2007 Balay has worked in Bagong Valencia and has gathered anecdotal notes relating to the trade across different stages in time. They have observed that selling illegal substances has become a significant means of livelihood for all ages in the community (see also Kusaka 2017). Thus, adults and children alike engage in the trade not only as a source of income but also as users. The stimulating properties of narcotics are deemed advantageous when conducting labour over several hours. Staying awake and alert for long periods, for example, is valuable for maximising income – tricycle drivers can make multiple trips and labourers are able to cover additional hours. For those not yet in the labour market, for instance youth and children, drugs are associated with coping with the insecurity and precarity of their social environments. However, while drugs clearly affect families in Bagong Valencia, leading to what Nicole Curato has called ‘latent anxieties’ (Curato 2016), seen from a global perspective, the Philippines does not have a substantial drug problem (Dignity/ Balay, 2018). The drug crisis was, in many ways, a constructed crisis that legitimised a war on predominantly poor areas like Bagong Valencia.<sup>8</sup>

Nationally, under the Rodrigo Duterte administration more than 7,000 deaths have been connected to the ongoing ‘war on drugs’ since 2016 (Simangan 2018: 68). With no statistical signs of the slowing of vigilante killings, this state-sanctioned violence has led some to identify the war as a genocide (ibid) and ‘an impending public health crisis’ (Macarayan et al 2016). This ‘spectacle of violence’ (Reyes 2016) is couched in state rhetoric of protection, its law-abiding citizens notionally defended against non-human criminals by police and vigilante groups who systematically clear societies of alleged drug dealers in the absence of due legal process (ibid). As part of the national campaign of the ‘war on drugs’, current policing efforts to curb the use and spread of illegal drugs has been markedly violent, constituting an unprecedented attack on communities like Bagong Valencia. As an area of intense campaign focus shown by documentation efforts by other CSOs and the academe alike<sup>9</sup>, Bagong Valencia has been subject to multiple extrajudicial killings, illegal arrests and detentions, as well as harassments and extortions. In the first nine months of the drug war from mid-2016, Balay documented more than 100 deaths in the area of Bagong Valencia, where the organisation works (DIGNITY/ Balay 2017).

In practical terms, the drug war policy works through ‘watch lists’, compiled by intelligence personnel of the Philippine National Police with inputs from local government officials and residents. Subsequently, police officers will visit the homes of suspected drug personalities to advise them to surrender. However, these watch lists often turn into kill lists (Warburg 2017), creating a ‘climate of fear’ as few residents know who are on the lists, who put them there and what the result may be.

It is within this context of state-sanctioned extrajudicial killings, historical forms of displacement and violence that families in this study struggle, many having lost family members through their perceived association with the drug trade.

### Profiling families

Within the seven families involved in the project, seven adult males and two male school students were killed for their alleged connection to illegal drugs. Some were the victims of summary executions inside their own homes, witnessed by their families. Described by their surviving family members as ‘obedient and responsible’, having either ‘no known involvement’ in the trade or having used a substance recreationally in the past, with ‘no public image’, these men have been characterised as respected by their communities and the victims of tragic circumstance. Some of the surviving family members work within the psychosocial intervention project at Balay. Whether or not these men are implicated in the crimes for which they lost their lives is not the central concern of this paper. The arbitrary nature of these killings has made it difficult to ascertain causes and motives. However, the effect the loss has had on families as victims has been severe in the form of lost income, truncated possibilities and resulting trauma.

The families in the study have an average number of eight members living in the household, with the largest having 15 in the limited space. Other relatives occasionally sleep in for a short span of time add more to this whenever they need to. This household setup is customary with cultural undertones. It is common in the country to accommodate members beyond the immediate family, with several permutations to the setup. Frequently, sons and daughters with children still live with their parents and other siblings. This holds true for all the families involved in the project aside from two of them. Most of the occupants of the household – around 70% during field visits – are either children or youths.

The average monthly income of the families in the project was reported to be 5,000 Philippine pesos. The economic development authority of the country states that for a family of five to live decently they would need roughly 42,000 Philippine pesos a month.<sup>10</sup> This is unachievable for a huge proportion of families in the Philippines. Those who earn even Php 20,000 a month lament that although it might be enough to sustain daily needs it leaves no cushion for long-term necessities, periods of illness, or sudden unpredictable circumstances.<sup>11</sup> The discrepancy with the actual amount that families in the project subsist on illustrates the enormity of their daily struggle. The killings have further compounded these struggles as families have lost income and incurred extra expenses for funeral arrangements (See also Coronel 2017). Consequently, some have indebted themselves further and even had to pull their children out of school. In summary, such living circumstances and the constant violence – even before the onset of the anti-drug campaign – put huge strain on families and their ability to function.



## Mzinti, South Africa

Mzinti, where we collected data for this study, is a large township falling under the City of Tshwane in the Gauteng province of South Africa. It lies in a remote corner of Gauteng near the border with Mpumalanga to the east. In many ways, it embodies a typical South African history. It was planned in the early 1980s at the height of apartheid on the border between the erstwhile Transvaal province and the Bantustan homeland of KwaNdebele. In 1984, the East Rand Development Corporation began construction of Mzinti as a central element in the industrialisation of KwaNdebele and the East Rand. Mzinti was originally planned to house about half a million people in 2010, not least to address overpopulation in faraway Soweto and to function as a labour reserve for renewed growth (Morris 1984; Tomlinson 1988). These original intentions are still visible, for instance in the ethnic composition of Mzinti. Hence, the most common languages are isiZulu (33.4%), isiNdebele (28.6%) and Sepedi (15.2%). However, the apartheid dream of development – always callous and violent in how it displaced people – did not go as planned. Today, Mzinti is best described as a peri-urban township, accommodating people stuck somewhere between urban dreams and imagined rural pasts. Rather than being a labour reserve it has now joined multiple other South African peri-urban sites in its accommodation of surplus people, that is, people with little or no stake in the formal economy of the country (Ferguson 2015). In this way, it resembles Bagong Valencia and Marchland locations in the Philippines and Liberia.

According to the census in 2011, Mzinti had a population of 48,493 - a far cry from the industrial future imagined in 1984 – with an almost equal distribution of males to females (48.5% and 51.5%). Most people in Mzinti have some secondary school education or have completed their matric (34.3% and 33.3%). Most (53%) are in an employment-active age group (20-65 years), but 12.5% earn no income and 28.5% earn under R20,000 per month. While it is unclear from StatsSA how many people live off social grants each month in Mzinti, the socio-economic structure suggests it is a sizeable share of the population, whether old-age pensions or disability or child support grants.<sup>12</sup> While there have been critiques of the grants, they have bankrolled poor families in urban and rural areas since their inception (Ferguson 2015; Natrass & Seekings 2008).

Given its recent development and sizeable infrastructural post-apartheid investments, much of the infrastructure in Mzinti is reasonably modern, with 78% to 90% of households using electricity for cooking, heating and lighting. Almost all the water (98.5%) comes from regional water schemes, with 46.4% of the households using flush toilets, 18% pit toilets with ventilation and 30% pit toilets without ventilation. However, the household infrastructure varies depending on income levels of the people living there, with reasonably modern and large houses in some areas, and shacks and informal dwellings in other areas, testifying to the constant influx of informal settlers. The people CSVR works with are among the more vulnerable and live in small houses or shacks.

## Apartheid (structured) violence

While the war on drugs in the Philippines represents contemporary state violence, South Africa is still struggling with the violent effects of the apartheid regime in ways that are evident in Mzinti. The township emerged as a result of a policy that featured forced

displacement of millions of people, homeland policies (stripping further millions of their rights within white South Africa) and influx control mechanisms designed to keep black Africans out of metropolitan South Africa (Beinart 2001). Despite significant policy changes since 1994, places like Mzinti remain at the bottom of one of the most unequal and violent countries in the world.<sup>13</sup>

Several influencing factors have resulted in a decline in family support and a high number of single-parent families (Berman & Berger 1988: 194), not least capitalist penetration into local societies, the migrant labour system, long periods of urbanisation and increased population. Furthermore, the apartheid system used economic migrants and forced labour for certain categories of work, particularly domestic work and mining. This meant that families were often separated: parents left to work in South Africa, leaving their children to be brought up by gogos (grandmothers). Such large-scale separation has had a profound impact on the family, particularly how child-raising is carried out.

We can see the remnants of this family system reflected in Mzinti, where 38.5% of households are female-headed. While this is not a problem in itself, many observers and parts of the general public see it as an indicator of the troubled South African township family. Another indicator of families in trouble is the horrendous level of gender-based violence - 41,498 rapes were recorded in the 2018-2019 reporting year alone. What is more disturbing is that these exorbitant rates are believed to be vastly under-reported; according to the National Institute for Crime Prevention and Rehabilitation only one in 20 rape cases is reported to the South African Police Service (Naidoo 2013: 210). Mzinti more or less followed the national average with 52 reported rapes in 2019, up from 36 in 2018.

Murder rates (as an indicator for violent crime levels in general) also remain high, with 20,938 murders in 2018/2019. While murder rates in Mzinti are slightly below the national average with 12 in 2018 or about 24 per 100,000 (against a national rate of 36 per 100,000<sup>14</sup>), they remain high.<sup>15</sup> Hamber (2000) and Machisa (2010) argue that the 'normalisation' of violence is a direct result of the high levels of violence under apartheid, whereby the cycle of violence was perpetuated. They posit that this 'normalisation' has resulted partly from the structural forms of violence of the political and the economic system.

An additional contributing factor for the normalisation of violence must be located with the history of policing in South Africa (Brogden & Shearing 1993; Hornberger 2011; Jensen 2014), not least the counter-insurgency war that the apartheid regime waged in the dying days of the era (Sparks, 1990). Some of the most brutal fighting took place on the East Rand in places like Thokoza, Tembisa and Katlehong between 1986 and 1994. Third force operations by the police and military fuelled incipient conflicts between township and hostel dwellers in so-called black-on-black violence, leaving thousands dead (Mamdani 2018; Jensen & Buur 2007). While Mzinti was not on the map to the same extent, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission dealt with amnesty cases from the region including bombings and murder of activists. As illustrated below, apartheid violence was not limited to these singular events but included ordinary, everyday forms of repression as well. This weaving of both structural and direct political oppression fundamentally destabilised both families and communities in places like Mzinti.

### Profiling families

As detailed in the methodological section above, participating families were mainly accessed through a psychosocial wellness programme offered to community members in Mzinti. This programme aims to focus on the healing of members of the community by helping them to better understand their own traumas and how it affects their current lives and relationships. Through this, they may be better able to react and relate to their families and wider community members, with the ultimate goal being that they are less likely to use violence (verbal, emotional, physical etc.) as a coping mechanism.

Six families were included in this case study. The number of members in the family ranged from three to ten people, with a total of 36 people and an average of six people per household. The structure of the families varied, with three including both parents, two having single parents (both female), and one family comprising a man and his niece. Children and dependents ranged from one to six biological children (average of three per family, mode is one), one family with a stepchild, siblings of the parents (three people) and their children (four people), grandchildren (six people), and parents of the parents (one person). Inclusion of extended families in the primary or nuclear family structure is common in South Africa, often with nieces, nephews, siblings and grandchildren treated as nuclear family members (brothers, sisters, daughters, sons, etc.). Hence, the family structure among the respondents did not comply with norms about nuclear families.

The families in the study have experienced a wide range of traumas, but in all families, at least one member was tortured during the apartheid era. While some of the family members did not (want) to elaborate on their past torture experiences, others did share details. One was tortured by the police at 14 years old for being involved in political activities. The police subjected another to sexual and other forms of torture. The mother of one family was tortured by the police and subsequently killed by 'necklacing' (a murder method that involves putting a tyre around the neck of a person, dousing it in petrol and setting it alight) for other political activists to locate another family member. In yet another family, a member was tortured alongside his brother. The brother's torture was so extensive the family could not identify his remains. In the final family, one member was arrested and forced to sleep on a concrete floor while pregnant. In addition to the torture experienced by the family members during apartheid, the families have additionally experienced both direct and indirect traumas, including police violence as well as systemic and everyday structural violence. This undoubtedly affects their daily lives, as well as their ability to function as a family.

### Marchland, Liberia

Marchland, where the study was carried out, is situated north of the Monrovia City centre, off UN Drive. It was established in the mid-1980s as Monrovia began to grow. Before this, the area was agricultural land. As the city began to expand, free land was converted into settlements. In the early years, farmers turned landlords rented out land to newcomers, thereby creating a community socially stratified along the lines of property ownership. As the community continued to grow, not least due to civil wars between 1990 and 2003, settlers moved further and further into the wetlands to the rear of the original community. The golden rule for ownership dictated that if people could dry out the land through landfills, they attained the right to occupy. However, settlers who live in the wetlands are extremely vulnerable to floods. This has resulted in yet another social stratification between those who stay on (relatively) dry land and those whose livelihoods and health are perpetually endangered by floods.

The growth of Marchland intimately relates to the displacement following the civil wars between 1990 and 2003. Much has been written about the Liberian civil war, particularly its lasting impact and widespread brutality. Quantitatively, the civil war saw 8% of the population, or some 200,000 people, killed in fighting or massacres (Allen & Devitt 2012). Over half the population were displaced as refugees to bordering countries and a staggering 75% of women (some estimates reaching 90%) were victims of conflict-related rape (Cohen & Green 2012). Monrovia, and places like Marchland, grew exponentially during the war, as it was one of the safer places owing to the presence of peacekeeping forces stationed there. Hence, while not solely attributable to the civil war period, Monrovia grew from 80,000 in 1966 to 1.1 million people in 2015. Consequently, the city's infrastructure has been incapable of matching the population growth and places like West Point (the oldest informal settlement in the city) and Marchland suffer constant floods that compound existing health hazards.<sup>16</sup>

The civil war period has had lasting effects on Liberian society. In Liberia, young adults born during the 1990s have spent nearly half of their lives with war around them, and so may be more familiar with violence than with peace. Studies confirm that the trauma of these wars has been vernacularised into the everyday life experiences of Liberians, with over half the nation reporting significant levels of PTSD symptoms (Johnson et al 2008). This has meant that the impact of collective trauma is still palpable over a decade later (Kelly et al 2018: 9). Furthermore, many Liberian youth still struggle to cope with war-related mental health problems, not least because former combatants and child soldiers constitute a large percentage of the population (Gausman et al 2019: 113; Borba et al 2016). Further studies have drawn lines between the trauma of war and substance abuse (Prust et al 2018) as well as rates of IPV (Kelly et al 2018) pointing to the multifaceted and long-term effects of the war on the continuous practices of violence. Many young Liberians have lacked good role models on which to base their own relations, as their parents became parents at a very young age or themselves suffer from negative mental legacies of conflict such as a predisposition to use violence to solve problems.

Moreover, strikes and violence are frequent in Liberia as people attempt to bring attention to the lack of educational opportunities, jobs and potential for upward mobility within society (WHO 2017: 15). These strikes, the local term for demonstrations, often relate to the transport sector and the informal and often illegalised motorbikes on the

road, which are usually ridden by young men. Such demonstrations are often directly linked to the right to movement in the city: they are protests against a particular form of police corruption where police ‘arrest’ bikes; that is, impound them to extort bribes from already poor slum dwellers (Larsen et al 2018). Strikes as a form of violence constitute one of three kinds of local violence in Liberia documented by Blair et al (2017): collective violence, characterised as violent strikes or protest; interpersonal violence, including rape, murder and aggravated assault; and extrajudicial violence, including trial by ordeal. Each is a defining and ubiquitous form of violence that Liberians live with every day (ibid).

In Marchland, LAPS and their partners report the existence of all these forms of violence. What is more, it is common for people to share videos and photos of graphic expressions of violence via social media. This means that violent imagery is often in circulation, contributing to further normalisation of violence within community consciousness.

## Ebola

While life was certainly challenging and often violent, there seemed to be a certain political stability in Liberia up until 2014, when Ebola struck. The Ebola crisis devastated Liberia. Clearly, Ebola does not constitute violence in the same way as apartheid or the war on drugs. However, the social consequences of Ebola were extremely violent. While statistics show that 4810 people died in Liberia (CDC 2019), this tells us little about the wider psychosocial and structural concussions that befell Liberians as a result. Along with the catastrophic effects on the country's economy, health, education systems and local revenues (WHO 2017: 12), the anguish of even more loss has contributed to significant collective trauma and psychological problems among the population (Rabelo et al 2016). Many Liberians spoke about Ebola in the language of the civil war: it was imagined as a battle to fight against, and one that cost the lives of many (Venables 2017: 39). Additionally, the epidemic produced what Van Bortel et al deem a ‘cyclical pattern of fear’ among communities (2016: 210), with the ferocity of Ebola's spread and highly contagious quality throwing people into a cataclysm of suspicion and distance. Stigmatisation and blame stalked communities, causing them to fracture and break (ibid); survivors, perceived as contagious, faced rejection from their families, professions and social circles (Venables 2017; Rabelo et al 2016; O'Brien & Tolosa 2016).

The mental distress for both survivors and those never infected cannot be overestimated. Symptom severity, as well as mortality rates, are testament to the horrifying nature of Ebola's course, and individuals would go to great lengths to protect themselves. Moreover, those affected are likely to experience psychological trauma due to both the terrifying nature of the sickness and their proximity to death. ‘Flashbacks’ are commonly cited psychological symptoms associated with Ebola exposure, and many experience painful feelings of guilt and shame due to potential transmissions (Rabelo et al 2016).

Due to its poverty, density and unsafe health conditions, Marchland faced specific problems in dealing with the epidemic. Recuperation after the epidemic was difficult. Indeed, each of the participant families in the study, many having spent time in Ebola Treatment Units (ETUs), experienced difficulties returning to the lives they left before Ebola, their experiences very much echoing the abovementioned social consequences

of stigma and isolation. During a 2016 visit, one young woman who had been confined in an ETU reflected on the Ebola crisis to members of the research team: ‘During the civil war, you could run as a family. During the Ebola crisis, everybody was on their own.’

## Profiling families

As mentioned in the methodology section, the families that are part of the study were identified through LAPS' vocational training programme. Other than one respondent, all participants had complicated and conflicted relations with their families, regardless of whether biological or extended. Most of the respondents circled in and out of the family units that they considered primary, sometimes living alone or with other dependents and sometimes living with extended family units loosely connected through blood. Most had children but, except for one respondent (who in general proved atypical), they were single parents, often with multiple dependents. While some of these dependents were biological offspring, this was not to be taken for granted. One young woman was even accredited with some form of parental responsibility for someone almost double her age. We will return to this in the next chapter, where we discuss family structures.

The primary respondents were mostly young, often female, and each had lost someone during the Ebola crisis. For the younger women, this was often their primary caregiver – aunts, mothers or fathers. As a result, they had been isolated in an ETU for 21 days of observation. Because of the internment and their proximity to death, their remaining families often ostracised them or, if not totally, allowed only limited entry into new family constellations. Several of the primary respondents had also been victimised during the civil wars, including witnessing the killing of close kin or having been violated themselves.

All families in the study struggled economically, including the one family that is in a slightly more advantageous position. They survived by selling goods at the market and, importantly, had access to remittances from a relative in Europe. Most of the female respondents engaged in commercial or transactional sex. This resonates with several studies finding that families commonly pressure girls to engage in transactional sex to generate resources for the family (Gausman et al 2019: 111; Atwood et al 2011; Okigbo et al 2014) and that in Monrovia, 70% of girls and 50% of boys reported having had sex for money (McCarraher et al 2013). Most of those engaging in transactional sex also report having issues with drug and alcohol abuse (see also Petruzzi et al 2018).

## Summary

In this chapter, we have described in some detail the contexts within which the study was conducted, as well as the families and respondents interviewed. As emphasised above, we do not aim to compare the different contexts. Rather, we aim to establish a framework within which to explore the overarching question of how families cope with violence and how and to what extent they are protective or perpetrative. Despite the differences, there are important points of conversion. All three communities accommodate marginalised people with problematic and often violent relations to the rest of society. They have often been displaced from elsewhere, be that because of war as in Liberia, economic development and gentrification as in the Philippines or apartheid as in South Africa. Hence, while the causes or motivations for displacement varied,



the effects of marginalisation are comparable. Economically, all families struggled to make ends meet, although on scales reflecting the socioeconomic development of their respective countries and the marginalisation of the peri-urban areas.

As explained in the methods section, in each context we focused on different processes of violence. The participants from South Africa had all experienced violence from the apartheid state. In Liberia, all informants had lost family members to the Ebola epidemic. Finally, in the Philippines all families had members killed in the war on drugs. Hence, the forms of violence varied substantially and in differing time periods, making direct comparison difficult. However, what the cases illustrate is how each form of violence was embedded in a longer legacy of violence, including forms of structural violence, social marginalisation and gendered and generational power differentials within families. Hence, while our informants in Liberia fought the effects of the Ebola crisis, they all had traumatic experiences from the civil wars. While the participants from South Africa still reeled from the effects of apartheid violence, new forms of violence – police, communal or familial – added to the stress. Lastly, while the summary killings from the war on drugs in the Philippines is a relatively recent phenomenon, the effects of it are compounded by longstanding forms of violence within families.

In sum, from the relatively stable families in the Philippines to the complex familial networks in South Africa and extended families suffering from recent years' turmoil in Liberia, families displayed both cultural characteristics and their own unique dynamics. However, despite their differences and similarities, they are both essential institutions in survival and central to the conflict in the study. Furthermore, while blood relations do play a role in the functioning of families, kin relations cannot be reduced to nuclear families, even if that is often the ideal model. Hence, the chapter raises important questions about family structure, about the legacies of violence and about how families cope with conflict and the extent to which they are perpetrative or protective. This will be the topic of the next chapter.

## CHAPTER 5: FAMILY AND VIOLENCE

In this chapter, we explore the relationship between family and violence through three case studies from each site. These cases were chosen not necessarily for their representational merit but rather because they allowed us to explore our central questions, namely how normative and practical models of family life unfold, how legacies of violence and state violence weave themselves into family life, and how aspects of both protection and perpetration present within familial constellations. We begin by introducing the case families in empirical detail before we explore these more analytical questions.

### Case Studies

Before embarking on an elucidation of our cases we briefly revisit some of the challenges touched upon within the methodology section. It is important, for instance, that owing to both the varying methods of data collection and fundamental differences in family constitutions across contexts, there are marked differences in the kinds of content provided in each of our cases. The material gathered in the Philippines, for example, was explicitly family focused and was able to get closer to participant reflections on this matter than, for example, our Liberian families. This was perhaps due to the intimate nature of the mapping exercises (detailed below) undertaken by our Filipino researchers but could equally reflect the wider privileging of the family as an institution in the country in general. In our South African data, owing to its elaboration through process notes, we are able to gain more visibility between and among family members and observe some of the mental processes that occupy the ruminations of our participating families than in Liberia, for example where, owing to the separation of individuals from their families, it is more of a challenge to build a holistic picture of relations as they currently stand. However, what we do gain from this context is a historicisation and sense of social precarity in the narration of violent events. Thus, suffice to say that, while distinct in composition, we hope the following cases will provide a basis for the reader to gain a closer understanding of the kinds of compromised conditions our families face across our research sites.



## The Philippines

### Family AS

Li, 53, had 11 children. She shares a household with her husband Da and all the children, except one who has moved out with his family and one who died. Two children in the household have families of their own, bringing the total in the household to 15. The two children with families of their own occupy a partitioned area of the house that they loosely refer to as their own space. They take care of the expenses associated with their own families but also contribute to the general expenses of the wider household. Da has a reasonably stable job as a foreman for a construction firm. Of their 11 children, Li and Da's eighth-born son was killed during the war on drugs. He was a student who was recognised in the neighbourhood as having 'no negative public image.' The second eldest son was a victim of torture and police brutality in 2009.

When speaking of her family life, Li expressed strong ideals regarding normative aspects of its constitution: that it begins with the commitment of two individuals and that family is what fundamentally shapes both community and society. Eventually, the role of children shifts as they get older, gaining more responsibility over time. Despite her description of family as an institution based upon mutual support, several ruptures to this ideal surfaced during Li's interviews. In talking about her life through a 'river of life' exercise,<sup>17</sup> she addressed a number of pivotal moments that have influenced her life so far. She pointed to a period of infidelity by her husband as well as an engagement in a sorority by her daughter as particularly difficult junctures. In happier times, she attested to both the financial and relational support she had always felt from her in-laws and the assistance they gave her, particularly in the early years of her marriage.

She was moreover forthcoming about the aspects of violence that she understood as inherent to family life. She attested to using physical modes of discipline with her children and said this was influenced by her own violent upbringing. As a young girl she experienced physical abuse from her uncle and described being hurt any time he 'got mad.' She detailed being hit by logs that left splinters behind, having to kneel on rock salt whilst balancing heavy items in her arms and being put into a rice sack, tied to a tree, and beaten.

These instances of severe family violence were, for Li, linked directly to the way she parented her own children. She admitted to physically hurting them, particularly the older ones, but after having learnt about child rights and positive discipline, reportedly discontinued her violent approach. She further lamented the intergenerational and long-term nature of intrafamily violence, reflecting that physical abuse as a form of discipline gets passed down generation by generation. She attributed her uncle's behaviour to his own childhood experiences in tandem with her own violent behaviours as a result of abuse. The acknowledgement of this painful cycle was not an easy cross to bear for Li, as she admitted to the emotional pain she suffered through hitting her children, as it reminded her of what she had experienced at the hands of her uncle. She lamented the long-term traumatic legacies of these forms of violence while reflecting upon the different forms abuse could take.

### Family ACE

E was an adult male who lived with his wife Ma, 49, eldest daughter Ed, 28, Ed's partner and two children, their second-born Em, 23, Em's partner and child, and a youngest daughter. Ma and Ed manage a convenience store. They all lived together until E and his brother were summarily executed for his perceived connection with the drugs trade. Notably, this is the only family identified in our participant group where the involvement of the victim with drugs is not denied.

After the death of their father, pre-existing rivalries between Ed and Em escalated, and several conflicts have been documented. Ma believed the source was jealousy from Ed, who was raised by her grandmother, whereas Em grew up with her parents. Ed believed Em (since she already has a family of her own) should no longer receive or ask for support from Ma and this was why she continued to confront her. These older conflicts had, according to Ma, been able to escalate in the absence of fear from the disciplinary role their father used to play. Ma, now a single parent, disliked her husband's use of violence as a mode of discipline and refrained from it after his passing. She remembers all too well his use of harsh and painful words as well as physical assault and revealed that these instances caused her to fear him. The fear of E was later confirmed by Ed when she detailed her father's return to the use of drugs. After apparently stopping using drugs after the birth of Em, the daughters were shocked when the drug abuse recommenced around a year before his death. In their words, it was due to mutual fear of their father that they did not address the issue.



### Family S

Eme, 49, and her husband Jo have 10 children. Jo has no stable employment and often works different jobs in construction sites. At the time of the interview he was without employment. Their eldest child has a family of his own and no longer lives in their household, whereas the rest of the children do. This includes their daughter An, 24, her partner and their three children, as well as the second-born and his partner. The total in the household is 16. The constitution of the household very much reflects the family ideologies expressed by both Eme and An during interview, namely that families have 'complete' members, that they each help each other with responsibilities, especially financially, and that they support each other whether having a new family or not.

Eme and An recount the experience of losing their son and brother respectively to the war on drugs. He was a 16-year-old student in secondary school, the fifth-born in the family, and was fondly remembered by the community as one of the family's most obedient and responsible children. His killing was for them another case of ill-fated circumstance, a case of mistaken identity and collateral damage, as he was not known to have any use or involvement with illegal drugs. He was killed while hanging out with his friends on a school night. An explained that her brother's killing has had a devastating effect on the entire family. Her younger siblings face stigma at school and she and her mother have become preoccupied with seeking justice. Due to their increased political activism, new rules for the family regarding safety and security have emerged to prevent further victimisation. These rules involve ensuring that all family members always know each other's whereabouts, especially the children. Consequently, when An and Eme are engaging in their political activities, an adult relative always remains in the house to attend to the children. Additionally, since the killing the children are no longer allowed to leave the house after 8pm.





## Liberia

### Family B

B, 21, lives in Cow Factory, a slaughterhouse in Monrovia. Despite her tender age she has four 'children' – two male and two female – aged 34, 23, 20 and two. The toddler is her only biological child yet owing to her ability to provide for the others, she is considered their mother. This is a common familial constellation in Liberia: the ability to provide is aligned with parentage. 'Bra B' meaning big brother, 'Big Sis' meaning big sister and 'our ma' or 'our pa' meaning mother or father are the main expressions used within the Liberian population that are associated with conditional/situational family relatedness. This is particularly salient in the case of B in that she is currently the beneficiary of an apprenticeship programme where she is learning to be a hairdresser; she has no great claims to fortune. The relative instability of B's socioeconomic status, and the fact that she has taken in so many dependents, speaks to the depth of poverty in Liberia.

B has been chosen as a case study as she resembles many other cases in our data set: she is young; she has lost family to Ebola; she has spent time in the ETU, and she has struggled with the stigma of being associated with the disease. While other cases not outlined here are, arguably, marked by more extreme forms of violence – rape, police brutality and physical intrafamilial violence, for example – we wish to be explicit in our endeavour to avoid trivially pushing forward the 'worst' or 'most violent' of cases. B in this sense, although experiencing extraordinary difficulties, can be said to represent many young women in this study who have been indirectly or directly affected by Ebola: she engages in transactional sex, has had dealings in illicit street life and has fallen into illegal substance abuse.

B previously lived with her biological parents alongside her brother and sister. However, during the Ebola crisis in 2014 both parents perished, and B had little option but to drop out of school owing to the loss of parental support. Furthermore, as a result of her parents' death, she was required to spend 21 days in quarantine. After her return from the ETU, B experienced considerable stigmatisation due to her associations with Ebola: she was not welcomed back into her home by her siblings owing to their fear of contamination. Her living situation with her siblings was thus strained and after several instances of violence (she was once severely beaten) and calls to leave the home by her sister (when she refused to sell goods at the market) she left home and rented a room in the community. She subsequently started smoking, stealing and engaging in commercial sex to get by. She had a relationship and bore a child with a man at some point but lost the child due to illness. Despite the iterations of violence at the hands of her family, B laments a happier time when she graduated from sixth grade and her family bought her gifts. Although her brother and sister banished her from the house, she still hopes that someday she will return to the family.

### Family D

D, 21, is an Ebola survivor who lives in Marchland. He is one of four siblings; he has two sisters aged 29 and 30 and a brother who is 31. All of them are in school. He has a daughter, 2, who is largely within his care. During the week she stays with his sisters and goes to kindergarten while he works informally as a 'wheelbarrow boy'<sup>18</sup>, and on the weekend she returns to him. The mother abandoned the family and he has not heard from her since.

Between the ages of seven and 15, D attested to being repeatedly victimised by his own family. He was then living with his mother and uncle (his mother's elder brother) in his uncle's house. This uncle took on a fatherly role and was a harsh disciplinarian; D was often beaten, starved and verbally abused, being called 'a dog'. Thus, his abuse took many forms; on several occasions he was thrown out of the house and on others he was kept indoors without food. When the Ebola crisis hit, D lost his mother and the uncle who had abused him as well as contracting the disease himself. Although surviving, when D returned to his community from the ETU the stigma was so intense, he was forced to leave. He became a drifter, moving through his precarious social environment largely alone. The exact form of his stigmatisation is not detailed but it is noted that he joined his peers in the use of marijuana and cocaine in Monrovia's ghettos. For his engagement in these activities D was arrested, jailed and beaten by police. As a result of his incarceration, D was required to pay a sum of money for his release. Family and friends attempted to come to his aid but were unable to raise the fee. Ultimately a woman from the community, whom D often helped by fetching water, paid the fee and he was released from jail.

### Family F

F, 34, lives with her husband and three children, aged 18, five and two. Her eldest child is biologically her niece, but owing to her cohabitation with the family she is considered a daughter. F is a high school graduate who now works as an informal street trader, selling goods to earn a living. Despite the relative stability of her current situation, F's past has been marked by extreme forms of violence. During the 1990s she resided in Lofa, a county in the northernmost part of Liberia, with relatives she considered parents despite not being biologically her own. The area was attacked during the civil war by a rebel group of which her stepbrother was a member. This group captured and killed her relatives. F, who was also captured during the insurgency, was raped by her stepbrother (who was forced to do so in the presence of the group or else F would have been killed). She later fled to safety in Monrovia with him.

Once in the capital the two siblings lived together briefly, but the shame and trauma drove them apart and they felt compelled to live independently from one another. F then moved into her own place in the community near to where her biological parents lived (separately, owing to divorce). During this period, her father was particularly helpful to her. However, during the Ebola crisis, and shortly after the natural death of her mother, her father fell victim to the disease and died. After his death F experienced great deprivation as he had been a great source of support to her. However, F's sister, who had left for Europe before the onset of the crisis, was able to send her remittances. Owing to this support, F and her family are now able to live in relative financial security.



## South Africa

### Family 1

A lives in a small shack in Mzinti with her two sons, nine and 11 years old. The boys' father is not present in their lives despite A's best efforts to encourage his involvement. He has another family and A has lost hope of his return. However, he threatens to take the boys away from A and leave them with his parents, seemingly as a power play. Both her sons are bullied at school and this is of great concern to A.

A was raped when she was eight years old – a similar age to her youngest son when he initially experienced bullying. She is very protective over her sons; her intense worry about the bullying is possibly in reaction to the lack of response from her family about her first rape incident. Since her first rape, she experienced further traumas in the form of rape and torture. These cases are not detailed but she attests to having abusive relationships with men and is currently being sexually harassed by someone at work. Her boys stay with her mother during the week alongside their cousins. Despite this arrangement, A has a conflicted relationship with her mother and sister, who live together and separately to her. Her mother denies her experience of rape and her sister, who has a job, constantly belittles her and questions her parenting. A's rape has never been discussed in the family.

### Family 2

J is an adult male who lives in Mzinti with his uncle. He is married to P who also lives in Mzinti but separately with her own mother and her and J's teenage daughter. J and P have both had individual counselling as well as couples counselling. P is partially blind and has severe narcolepsy and as a result receives a disability grant from SASSA, the SA Social Security Agency,<sup>19</sup> which helps with the financial strain. J has previously been unemployed and worked as a voluntary policeman. Currently he has a temporary job building roads.

J and P are having parenting problems with their daughter, 17, who was raped by a police officer. Since they reported the rape, the family has been subjected to harassment from the officer's family. The officer, despite indications that he has committed other rapes in the community, has been released from custody and the court date is repeatedly postponed. The challenge of parenting has been addressed during therapeutic interventions with J and P and they point to their daughter's 'teenage narcissism' and penchant for partying and causing conflicts. They are afraid that these behaviours, alongside her uniform that is 'too small' and revealing, will elicit further victimisation and they are working towards boundary setting to ensure her safety.

J carries a sense of guilt and responsibility for his daughter's victimisation as he was raped at a similar age. He was tortured by police at the age of 14 and has been in counselling for two years. CSVR has referred him to the local clinic for ongoing counselling as he continues to exhibit signs of depression and alcohol abuse. He is emotionally and verbally abusive when drunk. He keeps a gun in the house but claims that both his friends and his sense of self-control have stopped him from shooting his daughter's perpetrator. He admits he may use it should his family's safety be jeopardised.

### Family 3

Al, 49, lives with his wife L, their child, three, his stepdaughter T, 17, T's three-month-old infant Le, his niece, 28, and her 11-month-old son. Al is a torture survivor who struggles with a severe psychotic disorder as a result of his experiences. He was tortured in about 1994 when he was 24 years old, either the day before or the day after his mother was necklaced (executed by fire using a rubber tyre doused in petrol), because the police were looking for him and he was out of the house.

He has since been diagnosed with schizophrenia and subsists on a SASSA grant while L works in Pretoria during the week. Al has been continually harassed and mocked by members of the community for his mental health problems and interventions have centred on his ability to cope with these instances. L has considerable health issues of her own. She has severe burn scars on her chest where boiling water fell over her at the age of three during a domestic dispute between her parents. She was in hospital for seven years for the burns. Before meeting Al she was in an abusive relationship with a man named I, with whom she had a daughter and who would beat her in front of his policeman friends, his drinking buddies. In 2001, when the baby was nine months old, she and her daughter were placed in jail for a night. This, she believes, was arranged by I and the police refused to help her owing to their association with him. Despite the severity of the trauma in their pasts and the current challenges facing Al and L, they and their family appear to have a stable and secure family life and show affection for each other and the grandchildren.

## Themes of violence in families

From the preceding case studies, several themes have been identified for further inspection:

- Gendered Family Relations and Hierarchies of Victimhood
- Legacies of Violence
- Perpetration and Protection

As stated above, these themes are not applicable in equal measure for each of the cases; indeed, some contexts appear to have greater representation in certain areas over others. However, the themes provide a basis for us to generate some questions that may be helpful those working with families and trauma in the future. Methodologically, we generated the themes from the data in a bottom-up process where we discussed each of the cases in relation to one another and the literature. Letting the data speak is not always straightforward. While family and its features are often not spoken about directly, what we can detect from our notes is the inference of family, or rather an outline of it, which is alluded to. In examining how the participating families detail violence and not necessarily how they articulate family – a kind of collective reading between the lines – we are able to determine the dominant normative ideals that influence family constellations.

### Gendered Family Relations and Hierarchies of Victimhood

In examining the data across South Africa, the Philippines and Liberia it is apparent that each of the families emerge as distinct in articulation and practice, demonstrating the existence of different normative and practical models of family. In South Africa, there seems to be a preference for nuclear forms, as demonstrated in A's struggle to regain the involvement of her estranged partner in their son's life. However, the cases also demonstrate several other models or constellations. This resonates with literature on South African families where apartheid, labour migration systems and lately HIV/Aids fundamentally reshaped family lives (Budlender & Lund 2011). Both data and literature confirm the precarity and reconfigurations of cohesive family life in the face of systemic, physical and structural forms of violence.

In Liberia, what emerges are family models flexibly formed in the ashes of war. Here, family relatedness is less associated with biological notions of descent than predicated on financial ability to provide. In this sense, the consequences of both the civil wars and Ebola are clear to see in family formations, with sometimes only the husks of familial assistance remaining. Relationships predicated on financial ability to support become important and those with the capacity to care for and provide are often the ones heading newly formed households. This is apparent in the case of B, the 21-year-old woman with three dependents who are senior to her in age and biologically unrelated. Similarly, with the case of D, it was not his family who bailed him out of jail but a woman for whom he fetched water. Additionally, F grew up in a household of relatives she considered parents who were not related to her biologically. This speaks to the fluidity of family life in Liberia and the importance placed on both relatives and non-kin for survival in circumstances of extreme socio-economic hardship.

Of the three contexts the Philippines emerged as the most explicit in terms of privileging strong notions of normative family ideals. Here, iterations were expressed more clearly regarding the sanctity and centrality of families as well as the strength of its nuclear ideology. It is also here that we find the most clearly expressed gendered notions of family and patriarchal ideals regarding how families should look. Such findings could arguably be attributed to the different method of data collection but it is more likely to be related to the broader embedding of family life into the Filipino socio-political economy more generally and its absolute centrality in all aspects of social life.<sup>20</sup> In these cases, families are predicated on the union of a man and woman in marriage; they live together in multigenerational, blood-related households; they operate financially as units and help each other with child-caring responsibilities.

Social obligations within our Filipino families can be epitomised by family S, particularly in Eme and An's characterisation of families as having 'complete members' each helping each other with their responsibilities, particularly financially. The notion of being 'complete' illustrates the strength of normative ideals. These family portraits are echoed by Li in family AS, who stresses the importance of family in shaping society, and the growing responsibilities towards the family taken on by children as they grow older. In much literature on families in the Philippines, these responsibilities are discussed as sacrifice with strong religious connotations (Jensen 2018; Parreñas 2005). As such, an ideology of boundedness, togetherness and mutual support is apparent in these cases. This is not to say, however, that these families are devoid of violence or that these models are not contradicted, as when Li's husband engages in extramarital relations and subjects her to violence.

As we have seen, normative family models in the Philippines, and indeed South Africa and Liberia, are constantly threatened by ongoing forms of violence. However, we also observed that the way families organise themselves through the machinations of violence was something that changed often. These changes were temporally constituted and had both immediate and long-term effects. In the Philippines, for example, according to a widow the loss of a patriarch allowed household tensions to grow in the absence of discipline (in the case of family ACE). It also elicited changes in justice-seeking measures from relatives left behind and a reconstituting of family rules regarding safety. In South Africa, long-term changes as a result of circular migration, the rise of mineral capitalism, the HIV/AIDS epidemic and the legacy of apartheid has left many families struggling for survival. The introduction of social grants has both alleviated extreme forms of poverty in South Africa and changed family dynamics in African townships like Mzinti and rural homelands (Ferguson 2015). For one thing, the traditional patriarchal model of family roles, whereby men are the designated breadwinners, has been challenged as men have struggled to find a meaningful role in a formal economy with one of the highest unemployment rates in the world.

Similarly, the coming of Ebola in the wake of the civil war has had both immediate and long-term effects on family constitutions in Liberia. The inability of families to support diseased members and the climate of fear surrounding the virus resulted in the scattering of girls and women across the streets of Monrovia. These girls and women, overwhelmingly represented in our broader Liberian data, were largely left alone to fend for themselves, partaking in illicit street activities and surviving economically through their engagement in transactional sex. In this sense their experience of Ebola is explicitly gendered. While they hang on, it seems clear that their practices do not conform to

normative ideals about family life. Only F, living with her husband and two children, surviving on selling goods in the market and remittances from a sister, lives a life in accordance with normative ideals. However, we may gauge the ideals in the kinship structures that exclude the girls. In many ways, they seem to conform to patriarchal models of blood-related families. We shall return to this below.

Gendered notions of family norms also animate how violence is validated or assessed. Extrajudicial killings of men in the Philippines attract the most direct interest from the outside, while women's sense of problems fade into the background as functions of male suffering. This obscures female suffering, rendering it less visible, often inside the home, as a secondary form of victimization.<sup>21</sup> Hence, normative family models not only structure the assessment of what is the 'right kind of family' – complete, as one Philippine mother noted – but also how different forms of violence are assessed in a gendered hierarchy of victimhood.

### Legacies of continuous violence

Across the three contexts, violence is continuous and pervasive. While the war on drugs in the Philippines inaugurated a shocking new level of violence with damaging effects on the ability of families to sustain life, the war also expressed forms of violence that could not be reduced to the war itself but fed on stereotypical notions of the urban poor that, in earlier times, had also often been used to justify violent displacement and resettlement. Furthermore, as argued elsewhere (Jensen and Hapal 2018; Curato 2016; Kusaka 2017), state and residents' concerns with the illicit drug economy had led to both communal and state violence in the past. Likewise, in the South African cases, selected due to family members having experienced torture and ill-treatment at the hands of the apartheid state decades ago, forms of interpersonal, communal and state violence were still part of everyday life during our data collection, with families experiencing harassment and violence from the state and the surrounding communities as well as violence within families. Finally, while the Liberian cases were selected due to Ebola-induced trauma and subsequent violence, all participants and their families had experienced severe violence during the civil wars. Negative coping mechanisms are often passed on to younger generations and many Liberians have become parents after being abused at a very young age with very limited experience and capacity in their own families to draw on. Hence, in one case a woman had been raped by her own stepbrother during the war only to experience her father die of Ebola less than a decade later.

These continuous forms of trauma were often narrated as separate instances of violence or trauma. However, the cases also illustrate what we can talk about as intergenerational or transgenerational forms of trauma (Prager 2016; Isobel et al 2019; Mucci 2013; Bezo and Maggi 2015). In the case of Li in the Philippines, she directly links her use of violence in disciplining her children to her own extremely violent experiences at the hands of her uncle, forcing her to kneel on salt and being put in a bag, tied to a tree and beaten. In the case of Family 2 in South Africa, J laments his inability to protect his daughter from rape perpetrated by a police officer and relates this directly to his own experiences of sexual trauma at the hands of apartheid security forces. In this way, his hopes of having survived past the trauma were dashed as similar forms of violence were visited upon his daughter in what we can think of as the circulation of violence across generations. These two examples differ in that in the first case, violent upbringing may

beget violent parenting; and the second case, similar forms of violence target several generations. However, they both illustrate the extent towards which we need to think of violence across generations.

Across all contexts, state (or in Liberia, state-like rebel) organised violence has been a constant worry and source of destruction of family life. Torture, sexual harassment and extrajudicial killings have been normalised to the extent that they have been folded into the texture of everyday life (Das 2006). However, the cases also illustrate the need to understand how different forms of violence across different scales in the social ecology relate to each other. For instance, in the case of Family 2 in South Africa, J and P attempted to control their daughter and her behaviour in order to protect her from violence from the outside, especially in the aftermath of sexual violence. While this is an understandable reaction, some of the Philippine material suggests that fear of state violence or involvement in gangs and drugs lead to rather violent forms of parental disciplining. In this way, parental violence, while not condonable, must partly be seen as attempts to protect rather than to hurt. Hurting is deliberate and purposeful – justified by the intention to protect. It may also be suspected to be an aggressive projection of a fear emanating from a sense of being powerless to control external factors that threaten the perpetrators' capacity to defend themselves. This clearly feeds on a widespread belief in the benevolence of corporal punishment as a tool of discipline and hence the normalisation and justification of intra-household violence, but it also illustrates the ways in which state violence is folded into and entangled with violence against, for instance, children (Auyero & Berti 2016).

Communal forms of organised violence in the form of, for instance, vigilante justice did not feature directly in any of our cases except one:<sup>22</sup> the case of Al's mother being necklaced due to suspicions of her being a spy. However, the three contexts have known their share of communal violence and retribution. Many killings in the war on drugs are rumoured to be carried out by vigilantes (Jensen & Hapal 2018); non-state crime fighting and vigilante violence have long been staple elements in everyday policing in South Africa (Buur & Jensen 2004) and in Liberia, crime, especially theft, is often dealt with by community members (Larsen et al 2018). However, several of the cases relate directly to the effects of community stigmatisation of 'bad' behaviour. All informants tainted by Ebola have been marginalised and excluded; communal and neighbourly doubts about the innocence of those targeted in the war on drugs have lingering effects for families in the Philippines, and in the case of Al in South Africa, his trauma-induced mental health problems led to social marginalisation. Both the stigmatisation and the direct violence form part of what above we called authority-based or law-maintaining violence in which dominant notions of morality and order animate the ability of families and people to survive. Sometimes the dominant forms of morality are indeed also visible inside families in modes of disciplining in what some talk of as the normalisation of violence (Bourgois 2001). However, it also illustrates how violence moves across and connects different levels in the social ecology.

Resonating with feminist and intersectional approaches, the cases clearly illustrate the extent to which violence itself, as well as its effects, are both gendered and structured by generational concerns. As we write above, there is a hierarchy of victimhood in which the violation of men somehow is seen as more important or visible than the victimisation of women. Hence, while advocacy groups in the Philippines, including Balay, have focused on the implication for women and children, much more attention has been paid to



the extrajudicial killings themselves than the social costs of, for instance, families losing their breadwinner. As critiqued by Lotte Buch Segal (Segal 2016), this is often unproductively conceptualised as primary and secondary victimisation. Furthermore, the cases also indicate how differently violence affects men and women, with sexual violence disproportionately affecting women and murder equally disproportionately affecting men. Every single young woman in our Liberian material had experienced rape, whereas those killed in the Philippines were men. Furthermore, in the Philippines, evidence from Balay's work suggests that women experience coercive sex at the hands of police in exchange for their own freedom or the freedom of their relatives.<sup>23</sup> Finally, men and women were disciplined differently and in different places, with women more often suffering violations inside their family. This suggests that women are policed differently than men as part of defending patriarchal social orders, something that is corroborated by the literature on interpersonal violence (Kelly et al 2018; Horn et al 2014; WHO 2010; Vinck & Pham 2013; Hindin & Adair 2002). As our cases with young women in Liberia illustrate, the social sanctions meted out to young women who cannot or do not want to conform to dominant gender norms can be severe in the form of exclusion from families or disciplining violence inside families.

For all informants there existed an intimate relationship between violence and survival where often the latter took precedence, especially for surviving women in the Philippine drug war. While violence was mentioned in the first few conversations, in subsequent conversations they focused more on financial difficulties, economic struggles (finding ways and means to sustain daily living), and on safety and security concerns after having lost a husband, brother or father. In this way, violence significantly impacts on the ability to survive. Furthermore, the ability to cope with violence also depends on economic status. Hence, in the Liberian material F was clearly better off due to the remittances sent by her sister in Europe and thus better able to deal with trauma that in objective terms was no less significant than that suffered by participants who subsisted mostly on illicit economic activities and transactional sex. Consequently, while violence affects the livelihood of people, as the World Bank notes (Skaperdas et al 2009), the economic resources of affected populations also inform the ways in which they can handle crisis and violence. Again, as our cases suggest, both the effects of violence and the ability to cope with it are thoroughly gendered.

### Perpetration and Protection

Families across the three contexts have the propensity to both protect against and perpetrate violence, and it is this binary that we seek to critically engage with here. Families may shift to protect against communal forms of violence by internalising communication, emphasising rules and accountability, and ensuring curfews to protect against violent incidents from the outside, as we see in the Philippines. They may equally disintegrate; fracture under the pressure of oppressive structural violence and pervasive disease stigma, leaving only the outline of family once known and informal networks of care to depend upon. Families may also uphold or sustain the kinds of violence orbiting local moral worlds, the cycle of trauma continued within a culture of blame and anger. As such, the forms and dynamisms of families are multifarious and complex, with no one model of mutually constitutive 'support' universally applying to all.

The ways in which families cope with violence is of interest here. By 'coping' we do not necessarily mean in the positivist or productive manner with which the term is associated in much literature.<sup>24</sup> Some families do not 'cope' in any substantial sense. Rather, we explore what families do to mitigate violent conditions. As such it is important to remain cognisant that 'doing' may at times be counterproductive; acts may emerge out of desperation or exhaustion and families may not always display the kind of resilience associated with productive ways of coping. Examining 'doing' in this way involves considering how families attempt to break the cycle of violence and sustain the integrity of family life through a number of mechanisms, for instance blame, exclusion, violence and silence. lies do to mitigate violent conditions. As such it is important to remain cognisant that 'doing' may at times be counterproductive; acts may emerge out of desperation or exhaustion and families may not always display the kind of resilience associated with productive ways of coping. Examining 'doing' in this way involves considering how families attempt to break the cycle of violence and sustain the integrity of family life through a number of mechanisms, for instance blame, exclusion, violence and silence.

Commencing with silence, we see within South African Family 1 how the silence between family members has a continuous traumatic effect. The denial of A's rape by her mother and sister, for example, has a sustaining effect on the violence she experienced, as well as exacerbating the worries she has regarding her own young sons. Here the mechanisms of silence and denial are employed by A's mother and sister to sustain the idea of the moral family through the express erasure of a violent past. They strive to live in the present and uphold a sense of family normalcy through expunging the trauma. This can be seen also through A's sister's critique of A's mothering in that it suggests an ideal form of family that must continuously be aspired to.

We have identified blame as another mechanism to uphold the sanctity of family, specifically the relegation of blame to that which is outside of the family. This can be gauged within the Philippines context, where maintenance of the moral family is upheld through insistence on the innocence of the deceased family member. All but one of our Filipino families denied the involvement of their loved one in the drugs trade. Indeed, most killings were narrativised by families as 'collateral damage' or cases of 'mistaken identity'. Such iterations do two things: first, they cast out blame for the splintering of the family upon the state and second, they maintain the image of moral integrity of the normative family ideal. In this way, families protect against communitarian notions of danger and moral decay said to be caused by so-called drug personalities and users through underlining the honour and integrity of family members. Furthermore, the persistent innocence attributed to the deceased family member speaks not only to the upholding of the immediate moral family but also to a generalised acceptance of the Duterte regime's moral affront on communities (see also Kusaka 2017; Curato 2016). In upholding a family member's innocence through the narrative of obedience and responsibility, some families make statements about the legitimacy of the WOD: that is, the war is justified but misdirected.<sup>25</sup> This is not general, however, and one family was actively engaged in mobilisation against the war on drugs, often at their peril.

In some ways, Ebola and the war on drugs represent very different forms of violent affront, and as such they elicit an equally different set of responses from families. What appears representative across our Liberian data is a mechanism of deliberate helplessness and remorseful exclusion. The stigma associated with Ebola was so great

and felt like such a threat to life that family members deliberately distanced themselves from one another, ring-fencing and protecting themselves against isolated members associated with the disease. We see families being helpless and unable to assist one another owing to their own difficult circumstances. Responsibility towards one another becomes precarious, unknown and unanchored to former moralities. We see families attempting to survive by pushing out the unwanted members, who are no longer part of the moral family whole, thus arguably shedding a part of itself to stay alive. During the war situation, members of families were forced to harm each other, such as a brother forced to have sexual intercourse with his sister. Both Ebola and war time experiences left prolonged and excruciating remorse, anger and revenge tendencies within families.

Stigmatisation around the time of the Ebola crisis and its aftermath should not be underestimated when trying to understand exclusionary responses to the disease. Experiences of abandonment and difficulties of reintegration upon people's return to communities cannot be captured purely within the language of perpetration. The trauma of being inside an Ebola Treatment Unit as well as the potential loss of friends, relatives and wider social ties can have a profound effect on the psychological wellbeing of individuals, not to mention the intense community fear (Venables 2017: 36). The subjective experience of Ebola has been documented by many (for an intimate account see Igonoh 2015) and the horror of its course should not be underestimated. It is within this climate of fear that our families are embedded and it is important to be cognisant of the fact that the stigma of the disease not only attaches itself to the dangers of infection but is linked to fears relating to experiences the person had within the ETU (ibid: 39). A strong discourse of distance thereby exists due to the threat of contamination and health messaging surrounding touch inscribed with the deadly risks associated with physical contact. Fear is particularly heightened due to its recognition of the disease as 'transmissible, imminent, and invisible' (Pappas et al 2009: 744). It is thus everywhere and nowhere at once; the climate of fear surrounding Ebola is omnipresent and no one escapes suspicion. Additional to this environment of unease are the structural hazards that press up against families that are forced to struggle with the everyday difficulties of insecurity. As such they are placed in an almost unimaginable bind: accommodate a family member and risk exposure to the same tragic fate or create distance and protect what remains. It is this tragedy that complicates the notion of protection and perpetration and invokes the image of the family as something striven for and simultaneously threatened.

## Revisiting Perpetration and Protection

In this chapter we have explored nine case studies from South Africa, Liberia and the Philippines in order to analyse how they understand and practice inherently gendered notions of family and how over time violence has affected the ability to uphold family life as well as what families do in order to protect themselves, including how this might lead a family to assume perpetrative roles. What is clear from these cases is the extent to which violence is multisystemic and part of everyday life. Many of our families live in communities where violence permeates the everyday, invading homes and neighbourhoods and saturating all levels of social life. This is made visible by the fact that in South Africa, 41,498 rapes and 20,938 murders were recorded in 2019 alone, and that intimate partner violence is widely justified by both men and women as a normal and expected part of an intimate relationship in Liberia (Olayanju et al 2013; Uthman et al 2010). 'Beating as a sign of love' within relationships has been documented within the Liberian context as a prevalence that is not necessarily socially condoned but is nonetheless widespread (Abramowitz 2014). These examples are explicitly gendered, and this speaks to the pervasiveness of violence against women. Alternative intersections also play a part in these incidences of violence, however; for example, studies have found that low levels of household wealth in urban residences are associated with higher likelihood of intimate partner violence in the Philippines (Hindin & Adair 2002).

The analysis of the families has been rather bleak. Violence and perpetration are clear to see across our participating families and most families in the study face dilemmas and challenges that may seem insurmountable. However, there were also important instances of bravery and kindness. Despite the challenges, one of the families in South Africa had a loving and caring relationship - that of A and his wife L. B in Liberia had assumed responsibility for a range of strangers, often older than her. Families in the Philippines stuck together amid communal and state suspicion and one family even found the strength to participate in mobilisation against the drug war. There are quite evident patterns of protection that demonstrate attempts to break the cycle of violence, for example in the fact that Li in the Philippines no longer wishes to use corporal punishment on her children. Similarly, family S bind together and create new domestic practical measures to ensure the remaining family's safety. In Liberia, F's sister sends her remittances and A's family attend her graduation despite conflicted relations. In South Africa, J keeps a gun to protect against external violence and attends counselling to deal with his own substance abuse and anger. These are all ways in which we might imagine families using the tools at their disposal to protect against ongoing forms of violence. Furthermore, in noting the ways in which families respond to violence it is perhaps pertinent to note that each of the participating families engage directly and in concrete ways with the interventions and programmes implemented by each partner organisation. In this way they are positively enlisting themselves out of violence: in CSV in a therapeutic sense through psychosocial interventions; in Balay in a therapeutic sense, but also advocating for human rights protection and seeking accountability; and in LAPS in a practical way through attempts to gain new skills for future survival.

What each of the above instances allows us to observe is that perpetration and protection are complex and that they often exist alongside one other. As such, family members may be perpetrators, protectors and victims, often at the same time.



## CHAPTER 6: FINDINGS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

In this final chapter, we briefly sum up the main conclusions of the report before discussing how these conclusions relate to practices around working with families in violent contexts. While these contexts were quite different, as peri-urban areas they are marked by particular forms of exclusion, marginalisation and state violence. The study does not intend to provide detailed templates or blueprints for action. The data does not support such an endeavour and it was not our intention, as it would compromise the independence of organisations and the partnership on which the data collection relies. Rather, we seek, based on the different contexts, to identify some of the central dilemmas and challenges that the organisations may encounter and questions their members may want to ask when they work in these violent contexts through and with families.

### Summary of findings

In the report, we explored how families and kinship relations protect against, perpetrate and/or suffer from violence. We asked this question within a framework stressing the importance of understanding families and violence within an intersectional social ecology where families must be seen as gendered and generational institutions that are embedded in a larger ecology including not least communal, state and non-state authorities. This social ecology is structured by strong normative ideals about what families should look like, what constitutes moral comportment and what forms of violence are perceived as legitimate. In this way, we argued that specific configurations of roles, power and statuses produced specific forms of normative and practical notions of family life. Furthermore, we suggested that across all contexts, legacies of violence, along with poverty and marginalisation, animated family life and the ability of families to cope. Along with the temporal dimension, the study suggested that we cannot necessarily see internal family violence (domestic violence, intimate partner violence or child abuse) as separate from violence visited upon the family from the outside (vigilantism, extrajudicial killings and torture). Instead, the study illustrates how different domains of violence across the social ecology fold into family life. This analysis led us to explore critically how families perceive the functionality of violence based on a situated consideration and justification whether it is appropriate, legitimate, or necessary in a non-judgmental way. It was clear from the research that most of the families were struggling – not only to survive and cope with violence in its different forms but also with being a family.

While all the respondents felt significant pressures and tensions in fulfilling their own expectations of family life, we also identified important instances of bravery, resistance and generosity – resilience in an oft-repeated formulation. However, rather than focusing on these forms of resilience as positive ways of coping, we focused on what families did to survive and to protect themselves and (some of) their members. These practices included exclusion of some members of the families to protect the integrity of the remaining family. In other instances, we noted that violence, or the effects of it,





were silenced in ways that putatively allowed the family to go on living. Finally, blame for violence was deferred out of the family. In their different ways, these practices worked but they came with a price. They might even have been counterproductive. For instance, by suggesting that the Philippine police had wrongly targeted members of a family, blame was placed outside while the premise of the war – that drug addicts must be killed – often remained largely uncontested. While this is certainly true, it remains equally true that in the circumstances of serious state repression and communal stigmatisation, this was the strategy available – even if it was potentially counterproductive. The same reservations can be made about all the other strategies of protection, even the most violent ones. While they may be counterproductive and violent, they must be understood within the given social ecology.

## Implications for practice

This report emerges out of interventions under the Global Alliance to address violent implications of what we have referred to as authority-based or law-maintaining violence. In this way, there has always existed a close link between interventions and research. All interventions have thus been evaluated and monitored for accountability and learning purposes. However, by formulating and establishing a specific knowledge-generating project, we have been able to ask new questions and gain new insights into how families cope with violence. Rather than assuming, we have been able to explore their practices and composition as well as better understand the strain they are under in dealing with violence and crisis. Furthermore, and central to the Global Alliance ideals, the team has been composed of intervention and research staff across the four member organisations in a way that stressed common ownership and collaboration in all phases of the project, from conception to final drafting. While this is not action research – we identified the issue of families through our practices – it stresses the importance of ownership and collaboration in knowledge-generation as a crucial element in development and human rights partnerships. Furthermore, we deliberately designed the project to further South-South collaboration as one of the criteria of success.

Beyond the innovations in research collaboration, the analysis has identified ten dilemmas, challenges or questions that may be useful to consider when and if organisations want to work in violent contexts through and with families. In the following section we discuss them in turn. Central to all of them is the need to suspend easy moralistic – even legal – judgments in order to understand the often incredibly difficult contradictions and tensions the families in our study are caught up in. We formulate each challenge with reference to dominant frameworks of intervention.

- **Critical engagement with binaries of protection and perpetration**

Often interventions engage with issues of protection as opposed to perpetration of violence in a binary manner. Whether an act qualifies as perpetration or protection is a matter of perspective, where for instance the protection against drug and criminal gangs has led to violent actions against those who are seen as endangering safety. One person's protection may also be another's threat, as when a police officer protects his position by victimising others. Hence, there is a real need to reflect on what we mean when we talk of protection and perpetration in specific contexts.

- **Understanding the complex structures of violence locally**

Often interventions work with rights-based approaches that run the risk of compartmentalisation; in other words domestic violence and child abuse are seen as separate from state or communal violence. However, our data illustrates that families are embedded in complex structures (that we call the social ecology of violence) in ways that defy neat categorisations. Such a view is necessary to ward off stereotypical notions of poor families as inherently violent, brutal and unfit to raise children.

- **Seeing how state and communal violence are folded into family life**

Along similar lines, our data illustrates that state and communal violence intimately relate to domestic violence when, for instance, mothers violently discipline their children to protect them from greater dangers on the street. Perpetration can sometimes be protective, as many police officers would argue. However, for us, this relates to the serious pressure that communal and police violence exert on family life and its ability to survive. We need to understand the dilemmas that face families in a non-judgmental manner and enable them to deal with the dilemmas in productive rather than unproductive ways.

- **Legacies of violence**

Human rights violations are often seen as one-off events. However, in each of our three contexts, we appreciate the long-term effects of violence where layers of violence are sedimented upon older layers. Hence, trauma is seldom a singular event; rather, it is a component of a continuous crisis. We see intergenerational forms of trauma when a mother beats her own kids after having suffered at the hands of an uncle in the Philippines or the effects of apartheid violence in experiences of present-day rape. In Liberia, people have lived through civil war only to be devastated by Ebola in ways that also speak to continuous trauma and the legacy of violence. For instance, young people lack good role models on which to base their own relations, as their parents not only became parents at a very young age but also suffered from negative mental legacies of the conflict, such as a predisposition to use violence to solve problems. When engaging with families, it is necessary not to be confined to singular events of violence and to understand how violence has emerged as a condition of life or as a long line of traumatic events.

- **Pervasiveness of violence in everyday life**

Human rights interventions are based on the premise that violence is excessive and destructive and should be countered. While this has been a strong principle, it also goes against the grain of how many of the people with whom we work see violence as necessary in disciplining. Human rights organisations need to engage in serious conversations with people on the topic rather than harbouring assumptions about violence. Conversations and collective agonising over difficult questions work much better than judgment. Organisations and institutions often see this as a normalisation of violence that potentially stereotypes poor people. For instance, in South Africa, it could be argued that 'normalisation', as used by human rights organisations, has desensitised the emphasis behind the concept.

- **Gendered hierarchies of victimhood**

Increasingly, human rights and development organisations focus on gender issues. However, rather than simply counting the presence of women, there is a need to ask different questions about gender. Echoing the literature, our data illustrates that violence affects women and men differently. However, as the Philippine case illustrates, attention has been focused more on the killings that affect men and less on the social repercussions of violence, which is often borne disproportionately by women and children. This suggests a hierarchy of victimhood – the lingering suspicions that those left behind must face and the fact that their suffering can only be understood as functions of male, primary victimisation.

- **Individual violations and continuous crisis**

Many human rights and torture interventions focus on specific human rights violations with less attention to the pervasive and continuous crises where the violation is just one of many challenges, including not least poverty and inequality. Liberia, as one of the poorest countries in the world, is a stark illustration of this. Indeed, one of the cases from Liberia illustrates well that relatively good fortunes allow people to cope better with crisis. At the same time, violence and violations also produce poverty, as we can see from the Philippines where the loss of breadwinners sends families on a downward spiral. Hence, organisations (and funders) need to pay acute attention to the ability of families to engage productively with a violent onslaught, whether from the state, non-state perpetrators or something as impersonal as a contagious disease. Such a focus could lead to better support for families in this endeavour through psychosocial and poverty-reducing interventions.

- **Communal stigmatisation**

Many human rights organisations find it difficult to deal with community stigmatisation and violence. While communities and neighbourhoods can be protective, they can also be the scene of violent disciplining in the form of vigilante activity. While it is not very explicit in our data, vigilante violence is part of the local ecologies of violence. Communal stigmatisation is present in our data as neighbours negatively evaluate survivors of the war on drugs in the Philippines, torture in South Africa and Ebola in Liberia. Human rights organisations need to appreciate how families are embedded in communal ecologies, find ways to mobilise communities in the protection of vulnerable groups and help victimised families engage with their communities to prevent the perpetuation of violence.

- **Normative and practical models of family**

Interventions often work with simple definitions of what constitutes a family and all cases testify to the importance of families. However, it is also clear that families can look very different. For instance, one 22-year-old Liberian woman assumed maternal responsibility for a 34-year-old man to whom she was not blood-related. Several South African families worked along practical models of family life that had been developed over a century of racial capitalism, which conformed in no way to nuclear family ideals. However, at the same time it is also clear that these models do exist as cultural and normative ideals of what families should look like. These normative, often deeply moralistic, notions are at least sometimes deployed as parameters for ‘real’ family life that seldom resonate with living models of family life. Local frameworks and policies might even exacerbate this difference. In the Philippines, a national law goes as far as to describe that only

a male and female bonded in marriage would be considered as a family. Hence, interventions must reflect carefully about practical models as well as normative ideals about family life, within respective local frameworks, and how the two are sometimes difficult to reconcile, especially in crises. Furthermore, except for specifically queer-sensitive interventions, many organisations work with hetero-normative ideals of family. However, echoing intersectional and feminist analyses, families are often deeply patriarchal in how family members and society envision normative models. Our data illustrates that most informants reproduce these gendered and generational notions of authority. Families are not ‘complete’, as one Philippine woman put it, without both a mother and a father. However, the lived reality and practices often rub against these ideals, not least in times of crisis as in the Philippines or Liberia. While women (and the young) must increasingly fend for themselves, communal and social norms work against them, rendering it difficult to survive. In this way, there are powerful reasons that the commitment to gender and generational issues must be realised substantially and that it must be based on an intersectional analysis transcending ‘more women’.

- **Complex mechanisms of family survival**

Our data illustrates that families deal very differently with violent crises. In all three contexts, our data testifies to the fact that families can be the answer to a violent crisis. Despite hard odds stacked against them, they find strength in each other and their families to go on. Indeed, some families are heavily involved in mobilising against violence. However, while this suggests that families clearly are part of the answer to addressing violence, it is sometimes conditioned on difficult choices made in the families. In Liberia, it seems as though some families exclude members seen to endanger the family unit or undermine its ability to survive. Hence, except for one case, all our Liberian interlocutors lived alone or in precarious conditions after having been affected by Ebola or being associated with drugs. To our knowledge, none of the Philippine families excluded family members because they were associated with drugs. However, most of their narratives worked through understanding the killings as based on ‘mistaken identities’; that is, blame was ascribed to something outside of the family. In other cases, family integrity was maintained through silences where family survival depended on lack of recognition of a rape, as in one of the South African cases. Finally, in some of the cases, it seems that violent crises have fundamentally undermined families to the extent that they seem to disintegrate. While such disintegration seems to be more prevalent in Liberia, both South African and Philippine families are racked with internal strife and conflict. Hence, interventions need to take these complex survival mechanisms as their point of departure to be effective and sustainable. These reflections do not constitute a blueprint for interventions. However, they do suggest certain avenues for intervention, as well as outline some of the dilemmas the partner organisations faced in relation to including families in human rights interventions. Such reflections are, we suggest, imperative if we are to take into account local context and the ambiguous relationship between families and violence that posits them as perpetrative and protective as well as victims of violence.

## ENDNOTES

- 1 These efforts have been documented in a number of publications detailing the experiences and challenges of grassroots activists such as psycho-social interventions, community organising and social works approaches. See <https://dignity.dk/en/publications/>
- 2 See for instance Crenshaw, K. (1990). Mapping the margins: Intersectionality, identity politics, and violence against women of color. *Stan. L. Rev.*, 43, 1241; Shields, S. A. (2008). Gender: An intersectionality perspective. *Sex roles*, 59(5-6), 301-311.
- 3 Although the term was coined in the 1990s, the intersectional analysis of social phenomena preceded its official reification with black feminists in the 1960s and 70s using the epithet “black feminist” for example (Collins and Bilge 2016: 55). With growing dissatisfaction with race or gender-only approaches to violence against women in the 1980s, African-American scholars and activists sought a new way of analysing their experience outside of these binaried forms (Collins 1998). Consequently, from within multiracial feminism the birth of intersectionality as a theoretical framework was established, allowing for multiple inequalities to be recognised (Burgess-Proctor 2006).
- 4 [https://dignity.dk/wp-content/uploads/pubseries\\_no13.pdf](https://dignity.dk/wp-content/uploads/pubseries_no13.pdf)
- 5 See for instance the report of Special Rapporteur on Torture on domestic violence and extra-custodial violence. For a discussion, see Choudhury, Jensen and Kelly, 2018.
- 6 The local projects were designed to enhance risk groups’ ability to become functional members of families and communities in order to prevent authority-based violence. See <https://dignity.dk/en/dignitys-work/prevention-of-urban-violence/protection-of-local-communities/>
- 7 As the data collection project did not attempt to capture all experiences from all families within the three projects, these insights happened within the bounds of the narratives offered by the community partners involved in the data collection. Other families may offer other insights or interpretation on their situated relationships and encounters with violence.
- 8 Most killings during the period of 2016-2018 took place in poor urban neighbourhoods in Metro-Manila (Warburg and Jensen, 2019).
- 9 A website that mapped victims and services produced by Free Media Alternative ([angpangako.net](http://angpangako.net)) and comprehensive data and papers from prominent universities in the Philippines (accessible at: <http://ateneo.edu/aps/asog/news/admu-through-asog-dlsu-columbia-upd-launch-research-and-data-governments-anti-drug-campaign>; <https://drugarchive.ph/page/40-about-the-project>)
- 10 <https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2018/06/08/1822735/neda-family-5-needs-p42000-month-survive/amp/>
- 11 <https://www.cnnphilippines.com/life/culture/2018/06/12/filipino-families-poverty-line.html>
- 12 The South African treasury reports that in 2018/2019 around eighteen million people received a grant of some kind in South Africa. This number comprised 12,5 million child support grants, 3,5 million old age grants and one million disability grants. <http://www.treasury.gov.za/documents/National%20Budget/2019/enebooklets/Vote%2017%20Social%20Development.pdf>
- 13 With a Gini coefficient of 63, South Africa remains the most unequal society in the world <http://worldpopulationreview.com/countries/gini-coefficient-by-country/>. See also Landman et al. 2003: 1, 7 in Landman 2002: 239.
- 14 <https://citizen.co.za/news/south-africa/crime/2178462/factsheet-south-africas-crime-statistics-for-2018-19/#:~:text=The%20number%20of%20murders%20in,reaction%20to%20the%20crime%20statistics.>
- 15 Reported murder and rape rates compared to Katlehong, another East Rand township with a reputation of violence. Katlehong is about eight times the size of Mzinti. <https://www.crimes-tatssa.com/provinceselect.php?sortorder=&ShowProvince=Gauteng&go=1&Precincts%5B%5D=157&Precincts%5B%5D=307&Crimes%5B%5D=Murder&Crimes%5B%5D=Sexual+Offences&Years%5B%5D=2018&Years%5B%5D=2019&Submit=Submit>
- 16 <https://eros.usgs.gov/westafrica/case-study/urban-growth-liberias-only-metropolis-monrovia>
- 17 This exercise is used as a method to get people to reflect critically but also sensitively upon their lives. It requires the participant to chart their life’s course so far through the imagery of a river, attending to the shape, bends, turns, obstacles and flows. This symbolic contextualisation allows for a reflection upon the events, relationships and time periods that have come to shape the trajectory of life thus far.
- 18 This is a colloquial term for a person whose work is pushing a wheelbarrow to transport people’s luggage.
- 19 The SASSA grants have developed out of a grant system that under apartheid was restricted to coloureds, Indians and whites (Jensen, 2008; Ross, 2010).
- 20 This can be seen in family-based elites and businesses that dominate economic and political spheres in the country (McCoy 2009). The intimate relationship between family and state is uniquely constituted in the Philippines, that is, the patrimonial features of the state or ‘patron-client factional framework’ (Kerkvliet 1995) renders the Filipino political economy dominated by familial relationships and alliances. These family connections between the political and personal realms are further exemplified within Filipino constitutional arrangements, with the Family Code, written into Filipino jurisdiction in 1988, inscribing, for example, a joint responsibility between husband and wife for the support of the family and management of the household (Feliciano 1994: 558). Similarly, the Child and Welfare Code instructs parents to give their children affection, moral teachings, religious guidance and discipline in order to ensure good character formation (Concepcion 2011: 364). The state inscription of both heteronormative and nuclear ideals can further be seen in Article 149 of the code, which states, ‘The family, being the foundation of the nation, is a basic social institution which public policy cherishes and protects.’ (ibid: 555).
- 21 Within the field of psychology, secondary victimisation refers to victimisation that individuals suffer through victim blaming, for example by police and/or health care officials after the initial trauma. This is certainly applicable in how we think of ‘secondary’ suffering in that, in a psychosocial sense, women in the Philippines fall victim to ‘secondary’ forms of violence in that they too are the subjects of community surveillance and suspicion. However, the point we try to make is that the relative visibility of EJK obscures the suffering of women, rendering them ‘secondary’ victims within a hierarchy of suffering, and this, as Lotte Buch Segal (2016) suggests, is problematic.
- 22 This refers to the case studies chosen for illustration purposes here and is not representative of the wider data. Another case study, not herein described, includes a woman who witnessed the mob lynching of a community member. That is to say that collective violence through service delivery and vigilantism happens often in SA.
- 23 We have documented similar processes in Nairobi, where extra-judicial killings are rampant and women face demands for sex in exchange for the release of their male relatives from a potentially lethal arrest (Gudmundsen, Hansen and Jensen, 2017).
- 24 In the Philippines, one emic way to describe this is ‘pagtitiis’ – to endure. This is the struggle to bear a burden however difficult it is, or to simply accept the situation with the thought that the ordeal will end someday, and that divine justice will eventually fall upon the perpetrators when the time comes.
- 25 The cry of innocence might also be understood as a coping mechanism or response to the significant and widespread stigmatisation surrounding the WOD. Being associated with the drugs trade brings momentous consequences, not least the danger of being fatally marked but also in its rendering of participants as symbols of national corrosion. The far-reaching communitarian notions of danger as well as overall endorsement of Duterte’s vision (Dressel and Bonoan 2019: 134) from the general population has meant that any association with the trade has grave consequences.



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PERPETRATORS AND PROTECTORS: CENTERING FAMILY RELATIONS IN ADDRESSING VIOLENCE  
IN POOR NEIGHBOURHOODS

By Steffen Jensen, Meghan Belcher, Juancho Reyes, Dominique Dix-Peek, Cartor Temba and  
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